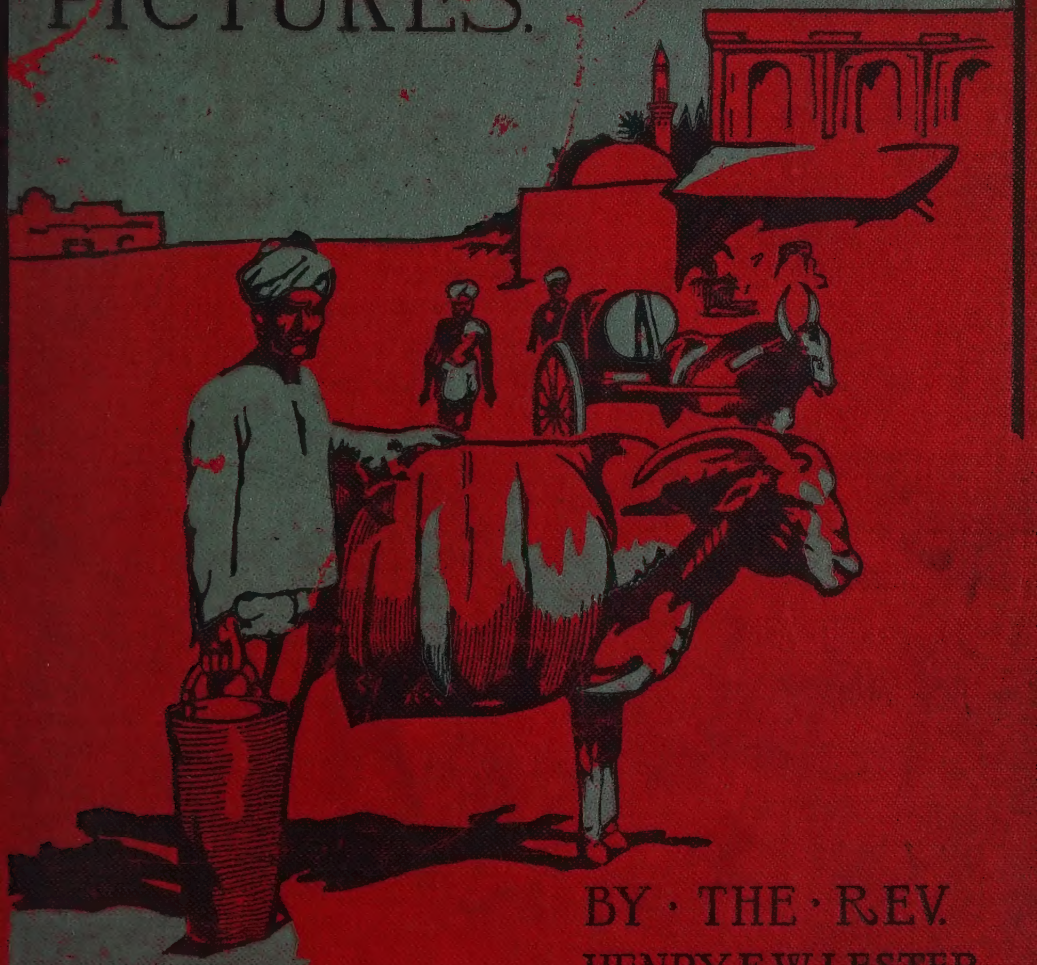
INDIAN VILLAGE PICTURES.



BY · THE · REV.
HENRY. F. W. LESTER.

LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

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INDIAN VILLAGE PICTURES

GANESHA, THE GOD WHO REMOVES OBSTACLES.

INDIAN VILLAGE PICTURES

By
THE REV. HENRY F. W. LESTER
OF BELLARY, S. INDIA.

WITH SEVENTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

THIS book is the Author's response to a request that he would prepare a book on India which should form a suitable gift for the younger supporters of the London Missionary Society.

The Author's readers will please bear in mind that the difficulty of the task assigned him is this : That the religious thought and daily life of India are essentially Oriental, while the readers of the book will be for the most part boys and girls of English Sunday Schools.

The reader will find several chapters devoted to the affairs of three women, namely, Satyawati, Yashodamma and Parvatamma. The Author wishes to say that they could not have been written had it not been for the material provided by the work of a famous Telugu writer M. R. Ry. K. Virasalingam Garu, Rai Bahadur, whose genius is so much admired by Telugu scholars. He hesitates to say more, lest Mr. Virasalingam Garu should repudiate this tribute, for it must be admitted that the Author has taken considerable liberties with the original story.

Siddappa is a character taken from a Canarese tract, written by the late Rev. Edwin Lewis, the loss of whose patient, loving heart and remarkable linguistic abilities so many Canarese people are still lamenting.

The story of the famous Tahsildar has already appeared in the *Madras Mail*. The Author begs to thank the Editor of that newspaper for permission to reprint it. It may surprise an older reader that in Chapter VIII the Padri yields so easily to such an appeal for his services as is there described. The fact is that the long discussion that ensued between the Rajah, Narayana and the Padri

has had to be omitted. It was felt to be quite unsuitable for the youthful reader. A similar remark applies to Chapter XIV. No such preaching as is there described would be allowed to pass without serious disturbance in the Padri's district. On the occasion referred to a tremendous uproar followed the Colporteur's address (page 148), which reduced the crowd by about one-half. An explanation of the resentment aroused was attempted but has been omitted. The youthful reader would not have read it.

Some of the photographs in this book are the property of the Rev. A. R. Slater (Wesleyan Missionary Society, Bangalore), the Rev. J. I. Macnair, and the Rev. R. W. Ross, B.A. (both of the L.M.S., South India), and E. W. Lewis, Esq., M.D. (late of the L.M.S. in South India, now of Stockport, Lancashire). The Author is grateful to these gentlemen for permission to use their photographs as illustrations.

The following small glossary may be found useful:—

AMMA, a word used in addressing Hindu girls and women of all grades in society.
DISTRICT, that division of an Indian province over which a European is generally placed as Commissioner, or Collector of Revenue.
GURU, a word difficult to translate. Our Christian people apply it to our Lord. The Hindu uses it when speaking of his religious teacher or priest.
KURNUM, a village official who keeps the accounts of land cultivation in connexion with the village.
PADRI, the term used all over India for a minister or missionary.
PRASADA, food offered to the god, or to a guru.
PUJARI, a worshipping, offering, or sacrificing priest in any temple.
PANCHAYAT, an assembly of five or more persons to settle a matter by arbitration.
REDDI, the head-man of the village.
RYOT, a farmer.
TAHSILDAR, the officer in charge of a taluq, generally a Hindu or a Mohammedan.
TALUQ, the division of a District.
VERNACULAR, native tongue.

INTRODUCTION

THE reader is asked to imagine a vast plain in India stretching for miles in all directions. Here and there appear the sandy bed of a dried-up watercourse, a little village nestling in its gardens of plantain and cocoanut trees, a pile of granite boulders emerging from the ground like monsters of a bygone age, and a lake which holds what is left of the drainage of last season's rains, after about two-thirds of it has been run off to irrigate the green rice fields which lie beneath its huge dam.

AN INDIAN TANK.

Far away on the horizon a low range of hills limits the range of his vision, otherwise the chief impression produced upon the traveller would be an almost intolerable one of infinite space.

Where it is not cultivated the plain seems to be covered by a shrub rising knee-high, which the people often use for tanning leather. Interspersed are trees. Here is the thorn tree, the branches of which are often cut down, and, much to the indignation of the cyclist, dragged

along the roads to the fields to provide hedges for the farmers wherever the aloe and cactus are not available. Here are also the mango, the banyan and the tamarind, trees much worthier of the name, and for the sake of the shade they give, held in great esteem by such as have to spend their days in tents.

Cart tracks more or less conspicuous, according to the depth of the two ruts in them, cross and re-cross each other in their mysterious passage from one village to another; while straight to its goal hundreds of miles away, cleaving the plain in two, runs one of the famous trunk roads of the land.

CORACLE AT ERODE.

Near the hills in the distance already pointed out, the eye catches the shimmer of water. It is the great river of the district — the one great river. There is none other comparable with it anywhere near. Unlike all lesser streams, this great river never fails. Rising somewhere in the west, where there are mountains high enough to intercept the rain clouds, the flood sweeps on, ever deepening and broadening, until it empties itself by innumerable mouths into the sea.

On its surface, like logs of wood, floats the alligator in scores. On its banks the peacock struts and the parrot screams, and over all shines the sun.

Who speaks of India speaks of the sun. From the moment its rim is seen rising above the horizon in the morning, till the hour when, in the evening, it hangs like a golden ball low down in the west, it is the sun moving in majesty across the almost fleckless blue sky which, for the greater part of the year, lords it over every living creature. It is the fear of him that calls the wild beast home to his lair, and rouses the traveller from his sleep, and starts him on his journey long before the dawn. It is from sheer weariness of his tyranny that every creature that can possibly do so lies down at midday to sleep; and it would seem, indeed, sometimes, as though only when relieved of his presence can men ever freely rejoice.

Hence the homage paid in India to the moon. You will see men standing in groups eagerly searching the evening sky for the first glimpse of it, after the dark fortnight has passed; and when it is at its full there is no more wonderful sight in the world. By day the dreary expanse of sandy soil with its scanty vegetation will suggest thoughts of gloom and even despair, and the squalor of the village and the filth of its surrounding lanes will excite loathing. But only let the sun sink and the moon rise, and then all that is sordid and even appalling will vanish from sight, as by magic, and the traveller gazes upon soft silvery splendour, and seems to breathe the very atmosphere of romance.

And yet the last word has not been said. Appreciation and criticism must both be qualified, for there are days, or at all events, mornings, when, marching from one camp to another, with the early wind in his face, the deer examining him at a distance, the plain he is crossing unrolling itself in immeasurable breadths before him, and the glorious sunshine reflecting itself in every green leaf around him, the traveller feels ashamed of all the harsh language he has so often used about the sun.

And there are nights when suffering man would desire to revise all that has ever been written or sung concerning the witchery of the moon. He might possibly retain the word, but only for the sake of its sinister implications. For there are nights when the face of the moon resembles nothing so much as the face of a witch. The breeze dies down till a cobweb would hang unmoved from the bough of a tree. All the heat that the earth has absorbed during the day seems now to radiate out from it again, and an atmosphere intolerably close hangs like a pall over sleepless thousands. Then, lying on one's back in the open, one recoils from the face of the moon as from something malignant and malicious, and wonders how one could ever have uttered one word in her praise.

Imagine all this, and the reader sees and feels India—the plains of India.

CHAPTER I

WILD OATS

MOST people have heard of what is called the Native States of India, and know that they are governed by great Princes, often called Rajahs. It is not necessary to enter into any detailed explanation concerning the origin of these States, or the relation of them to the British Government. A few remarks will be quite enough for our purpose.

These States are sometimes very rich and powerful, but, notwithstanding, their Rajahs are by no means what we should call autocrats. Since the British Government protects them from invasion, the Rajahs must be loyal to the King-Emperor. Since the British Government is ultimately responsible for the welfare of their people, the Rajahs must administer the affairs of their States with some consideration for the happiness of their subjects.

In consequence of this relationship between the Supreme Government and the various States, the Viceroy of India appoints a representative to the courts of these Rajahs, who is generally called a Resident.

In the case of the larger States the Resident is a European of high rank, worthy of the court to which he is attached. In the case of the smaller States, affairs are often more efficiently conducted by a Hindu or a Mohammedan. In the State with which this story is concerned the Resident was a Brahmin, and a Brahmin is, of course, a member

of the most powerful caste in India. Originally a priestly caste, the people instinctively regard them with a reverence which a member of no other caste can possibly evoke. A great many Brahmins it is true have ceased to engage in priestly functions. They are now just what we should call men of affairs, but their authority and power are almost as great as ever, and the task of governing in the hands of a Brahmin is consequently performed with much less friction than by any one else. A Brahmin has only to raise his hand, and a whole District trembles.

The duties of a Resident are both onerous and varied. For example, should the British Government ever feel itself bound to make unpleasant comments upon some action of a Rajah, or should a Rajah ever wish to protest against any encroachment upon his privileges made by the British Government, the Resident is the medium chosen for these communications, and if he is, as he ought to be, a man of wisdom and tact, he so expresses himself that the chance of any permanent ill-feeling arising is reduced to a minimum. But the most difficult and delicate task a Resident has to accomplish is so to watch a Rajah that the rights of his subjects may never be imperilled by any undue extravagance or wilful piece of despotism. Rajahs have been known to be both extravagant and despotic. Eastern Princes may not be worse in this respect than some Western Princes; but the people of the West can be trusted to look after themselves, whereas the people of the East rely upon the British Government.

And now a brief word concerning the relation of these Native States to the Crown. As every one knows, at the head of the Government of India the King-Emperor is represented by the Viceroy. But as India is so vast a country, it has been found advisable for the purpose of

adequate supervision to divide it into Provinces. There is the Province of Madras, for instance, the Province of Bombay, and others. The administration of each is presided over by a Governor. But the Governor's task would be as impossible as that of the Viceroy, were it not that his Province is subdivided also. These divisions are called Districts, and each District is placed in charge of an officer directly

ON THE WAY TO JAMMALAMADUGU.
A SANDY ROAD.

responsible to the Governor, called a Collector of Revenue, or Commissioner.

Now there are certain Native States so important that to reckon them as component parts of a Province would be regarded as an insult. They are Provinces in themselves, and their Rajah is equivalent to a Governor. He will probably be called a Maharajah.

But the State with which we are concerned belongs to another class altogether. It is a Native State, it is true, but a very insignificant one, so insignificant, indeed, that it is to be doubted whether the Viceroys ever really become acquainted with its affairs. Between its

humble Brahmin Resident and the Viceroy, officials intervene, exercising all sorts of authority. Of these only two need be mentioned here. One is the Commissioner of the District in which so small a State has been incorporated, and the other the Governor of that Province to which the District belongs. But these two officials are very significant. They stand for that very great difference in status which exists between the great States and the smaller, between the Maharajah whom no one but the Viceroy separates from direct communication with the King-Emperor, and the petty Rajah who is as far removed from the throne of England as any ordinary small landowner at home.

No, our State is neither an extensive nor an important one. But it is very lovely country, and its first Rajah had a history worth writing a book about. It is situated far in the interior of India. To reach it one has to cross the plains already described. And as the nearer one approaches the State, the drearier the plains seem to grow and the more intolerable the glare, every traveller is well content with the prospect that unfolds itself before him when once he has crossed the low range of hills that guards the entrance, and he finishes his journey beneath an avenue of trees, amid well-watered, well-wooded and fertile fields.

Most visitors, indeed, express surprise at the generosity of a Government that could part with such an oasis in such a desert. The fact is it was bestowed upon an ancestor of the Rajah of our story as a reward for loyalty at a crisis in the history of India when disloyalty would have added immeasurably to the difficulties with which our Government was then contending. But as years passed by, and the Rajahs did little else but waste their substance in riotous living, it must have cost successive generations of British administrators no

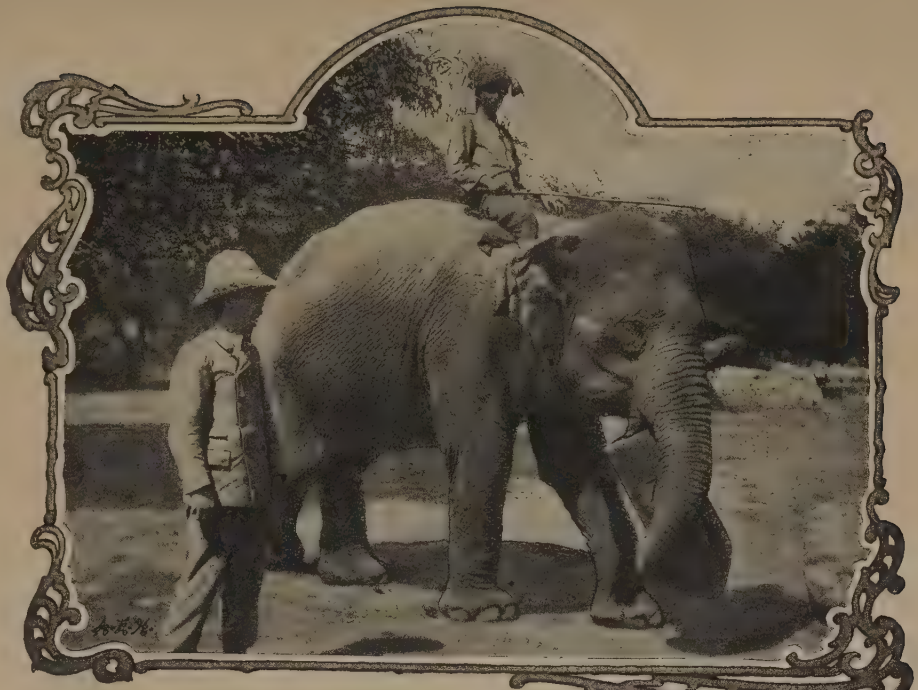
little self-restraint to abstain from re-appropriating the gift. Any Government less honourable would long ago have regarded the grant to so dissipated a race of Rajahs as a mistake, and, if only in the interests of their harassed subjects, would have treated the records of it as so much waste paper, and repossessed themselves of a territory so wastefully administrated. Indeed that is what nearly did happen. The Rajah of our story only just escaped the disgrace of being the last of his race to rule over a Native State. He may not have been the worst, perhaps; he certainly was the most exasperating. The Resident would advise, the Commissioner protest, the Governor storm. Nothing seemed to check his extravagance or restrain his despotism.

At last Government grew weary of remonstrating, and were contemplating doing something very drastic and unpleasant, when their patience was at last rewarded. To their utter amazement the Rajah reformed and made amends for his riotous past in so whole-hearted a fashion that his grateful people are still praising him, and the British Government has assigned him a place in history on a level with that famous ancestor of his who stood by the side of the British troops in the wars of long ago. But the story of the Rajah must be told at greater detail, and unfortunately we must begin it at that stage in his career when he seemed bent upon nothing else but his own ruin.

The Rajah from the very first day that he was allowed to handle money never seemed to know the value of it. He was always extravagant—how many Rajahs are there, indeed, who have *not* been extravagant? But he was not always dissipated. At first his pursuits were innocent enough. They may not have been as dignified as his people would have liked them to be, for the Hindus are just as conventional in some of their notions as other people, and yet the worst they had to

say about him in his earlier days was that he was too fond of imitating the English. They forgave him his extravagance; and certainly it did appear as though what is called the sporting mania of the ordinary Englishman had somehow infected him. The pity of it is, perhaps, that such inclinations as he had that way never became enthusiasms. If they had, he might never have developed the habits he did later on in life. No one drinks and gambles all night and sleeps all day who really loves the strenuous life of the athlete, and exults in the open plain where the fleet deer graze, or in the dark mysterious forest where more dangerous game is to be found, It was not his athletic instincts that proved the Rajah's undoing, for he never really possessed any. If he did, they could only have just penetrated his skin, for they were soon satisfied. No, what ruined the Rajah is just that which ruins other people—selfishness. So long as the outdoor life interested him he lived out of doors. When it ceased to please, he retreated indoors and sought amusement there. And being selfish, whether he was out of doors or within, he grudged no money where his pleasures were concerned.

From first to last his short athletic career was nothing more than a series of experiments to discover what it was that gave the Englishman so much pleasure. He never acquired any real zest for what is called sport. His interest would subside as quickly as it arose. It sounds very ignoble, but the truth must be told: no sooner had the Rajah made some progress in any particular pursuit, than something would happen to demonstrate the danger or fatigue attached to it, and his liking turned to loathing. Very different was he from most Hindu youths of to-day. They may be betrayed into nervousness at critical moments for want of experience, but no one can charge them with



INDIAN ELEPHANT CARRYING LOG.

cowardice. Still our Rajah ought not to be despised. He deserves more sympathy than contempt. One can hardly expect that man to have sound nerves and resolute will, so many of whose ancestors had all died the death of the profligate. But the reader had better judge the Rajah for himself.

One day, while still young, he happened to be paying an official visit to the Commissioner of his District. There he saw the game of golf being played, and was so attracted by it that on his return home he gave the order for links to be laid out, and by dint of constant practice soon acquired considerable skill. He played both early and late, and it looked as though the game would become with him the passion it is with so many English people. But an unfortunate accident happened which nearly killed him (to repeat his own explanation) and destroyed his interest in the game for ever.

For this accident the Rajah's secretary was responsible, a man who had never wished to play golf or any other game. Any need he ever felt for recreation was much more rationally satisfied. If only allowed to meet his friends in the evening in the village square, where a mound of earth round the root of a tree forms a very pleasant rendezvous for all who, like himself, enjoy spending their leisure chatting and chewing betel leaf, he experienced no craving for violent exercise of any sort. Indeed, he regarded it as an outrage upon his dignity to be compelled so often to accompany the Rajah in the three-mile walk on his golf links. So when the Rajah was stunned by a ball which the secretary mis-hit in some extraordinary fashion, it is doubtful if the secretary felt all the remorse he expressed. The game being abandoned for ever from that day, he really credited himself with being the instrument of Providence for ridding the Court of

an intolerable nuisance, and he was not alone in coming to that conclusion. Other officials, who had been impressed against their will into the same service, held a similar view.

But their relief was of short duration. It was not very long before the Rajah became the victim of another craze. Some wandering Englishman recommended cricket to him and introduced him to the

IN COCOA-NUT LAND.

game, and some young Hindus home for their holidays from the University in the provincial town were only too glad to encourage him.

The Rajah had a pitch carefully laid out, and as soon as his mastery over the limited bowling ability of his little State gave him the requisite confidence he began to dream dreams of one day gaining fame before a more critical audience in the great city by the sea, and he imported a long-armed professional of the tallest and slimmest build, under whose tuition he certainly made great progress.

But this professional was at heart a pedant, and enjoyed no peace of mind until the Rajah consented to practise in accordance with a certain tradition which involved the pegging of the Rajah's foot down to the ground. Unfortunately, whatever the particular merits this method may possess, to be successful a certain amount of courage as well as docility is required, and in courage, as has been already stated, the Rajah was deficient. Consequently that happened which might have been expected. The fifth ball the professional bowled down had hardly bounced off the Rajah's person and come to a standstill close by, before the peons standing behind the nets, in response to their master's frenzied gestures, hastened to release him from his captivity and assist him to the palace. There the rest of the day was mournfully spent in the company of the apothecary and in an atmosphere charged with the odour of a certain well-known liniment. This incident, of course, terminated not only the professional's engagement but also the Rajah's cricketing ambitions. The latter's enthusiasm never recovered from that day's experience, and for some time afterwards tennis, badminton and croquet and similar tame pursuits satisfied the Rajah's craving for amusement.

About a year afterwards, he paid a visit to a large military station, and there caught sight of a four-in-hand which some of the officers were fond of driving about, and immediately his dormant instincts asserted themselves once more. He knew no rest day or night until he had made arrangements for acquiring a coach and four of his own. His Resident, who, if he had not to find the money, knew he would have to account for it, did all he could to dissuade him, but in vain, so he consoled himself with the reflection that the Rajah's contemplated purchase was a coach and four only, that if the number of horses the

STREET IN BANGALORE.

Rajah had seen had happened to be eight instead of four, eight would have been the number hankered after and eventually purchased. He did, however, succeed with one of his protests. The Rajah consented to place himself under tuition before risking his life on the box, and the services of a very seedy-looking European were secured, whose knowledge of horses and their ways was said to be profound. Among his many qualifications for the post those that impressed the Rajah and his suite most were an almost ascetic indifference to the quality of the alcohol he drank, provided the quantity was sufficient, and a devotion to a certain pair of riding boots with spurs attached thereto, so deep rooted that they formed part of his apparel by night almost as often as by day. Under this expert guidance the Rajah rapidly made such progress in the art of driving that the Resident felt himself justified sooner than he expected in advising the

Rajah, on the score of economy, to dispense with his tutor's services. To be sure the suggestion was made almost as much in the Resident's own interest as in that of the Rajah. The Resident had grown weary of the strain upon his nerves involved in being driven about the crowded streets at a breakneck pace by an irresponsible enthusiast who never seemed satisfied with his day's work unless he could afterwards boast of the number of corners he had negotiated with his off wheels in the air, and could bring his horses home covered with a lather of sweat. There was no necessity to do more than make the suggestion. The Rajah was no happier in such circumstances than his Resident, besides which he was growing impatient to assume supreme control of the reins himself. So within a week or two the indignant coachman, who thought he had secured an engagement for life, was returning to his old haunts in stages determined by the hospitality of his many acquaintances on the railway, and the Rajah, dressed as much like his instructor as his figure would allow, was finding unalloyed happiness in personally conducting crowded coach-loads of his perturbed subjects throughout the length and breadth of his dominions. And then the usual catastrophe happened, and the Rajah was cured of another infatuation.

One of the methods adopted by a poor man with a grievance in India who desires to present a petition to an official, and despairs of doing it in any other way, is to take up a position by the side of the road along which the official is expected to pass. Then on the approach of the official (generally on horseback) the petitioner flings down the blanket he will probably be carrying, and prostrates himself on the ground in a profound obeisance. Such was the cause of the accident which closed the Rajah's coaching career. The Rajah was one day

driving along at a considerable speed, when one of his people adopted this method of attracting his notice. The result was striking. The startled horses gave a tremendous leap to the side, and then set off at a furious gallop down the narrow road. The Rajah tugged at the off rein, the Resident clutched the near rein, while the Munshi, than whom no stouter gentleman had ever climbed to the roof of a

STREET IN AN INDIAN VILLAGE.

coach before, made frantic efforts to apply the brake. Of course an accident was unavoidable. It occurred at the corner of the road, where the coach came into collision with a lumbering bullock cart. Imagine a crash like the impact of two armies, a heap of struggling horses, the flight through the air of half a dozen human beings, and what would one expect? What but broken limbs and perhaps

death. And yet, strange to say, no serious injury was sustained by any one. A few moments of dazed silence, and then four of the party struggled to their feet practically unscathed. Their escape was due to the hedge by the side of the road, which broke their fall. A little later the Rajah rose to his feet, more frightened, perhaps, but less injured than any one else. His good fortune he owed entirely to his Munshi, and he could not help feeling, as he rolled off that official, that if only he could depend upon the Munshi to break his fall he might tumble out of a balloon without much danger. Finally the Munshi, whose recovery under the circumstances was naturally the most tardy, was assisted to his feet, and when he had been, so to speak, reinflated, all that remained to be done was to search for thorns.

I need hardly say that after that day the Rajah was never seen on the box again. For some time after the accident a bullock coach, drawn by a pair of trotting bulls, carried him about the country as quickly as he wished, and then, without any warning, he set up a racing stable, entered his horses for the principal races of the day all over the country, retained famous jockeys at exorbitant fees, and, discovering that the few prizes he won were more ornamental than remunerative, attempted to overtake his ever-increasing outlay by the precarious method of betting.

Now no one can lay out expensive golf links and cricket grounds, keep a coach and four horses and construct special roads for his drives, buy racehorses, present cups for prizes at race meetings, support the staff which most of these pursuits require, entertain the miscellaneous acquaintances which they obtain for one, and hope at the same time to live within any ordinary income. In the case of the Rajah he must needs also patronize what he called Art. It must

not be imagined that he collected books and pictures, or embellished his kingdom with boulevards and majestic architecture, because he did nothing of the sort. The method he adopted for the satisfaction of his aesthetic faculties was really less artistic than stupid. He introduced various kinds of theatrical companies into his capital, and among them was a marvellous artiste of the name of Ratnasani, and this it was that hurried on the great financial crash which abruptly ended the least worthy portion of the Rajah's life.

It was not for want of advice and warning that so heavy a price had to be paid by the Rajah for his experience. He had at various times received from British officials more or less emphatic protests against the extravagant rate at which he was living. Towards the end his Resident never met him without making some pathetic appeal to call a halt in his downward course while it was yet possible to do so. But it was not till he had exhausted every resource for raising money which he could think of, that he consented to pay any attention to these remonstrances. By that time, however, Government had ceased either to warn or to advise. They practically deposed him. The theatrical companies, including Ratnasani, were requested to retire, which they did, with the assistance of many more carts for their luggage than they needed when they entered the little State. The racehorses were sold, and professionals of all sorts dismissed. The racecourse became a common grazing ground for the cattle of the place, and the Rajah was obliged to derive what amusement he could from his reminiscences, while haughty officials immersed themselves in the study of such accounts as they could find, or hunted about for such accounts as they could not find.

CHAPTER II

THE TYRANT OF THE TALUQ

INDIA is a country, or rather a continent, in which for our purpose the village is of greater importance than the city. The census returns show that nine out of ten of its vast population live in villages. City life cannot be ignored, of course. There are cities in India as well as villages, and huge overgrown cities some of them are. They are distinguished by magnificent buildings, such as barracks, hospitals, museums, railway stations, universities, banks, courts of law and the palaces of the wealthy. While rendered hideous at one end by slums unutterably and pathetically vile, at the other end they are often transformed into fairyland by parks and gardens, where the flowers and foliage of the East simply run riot It is in the city that the men of fame congregate—doctor, lawyer, soldier, merchant and administrator—and yet the man who wishes to understand India must make up his mind to quit the city. He must leave behind him the shining railway metals and humming telegraph wires, and plunge into the interior, where no engine whistle has ever alarmed the grazing cattle, and the only hint of western civilization is, perhaps, the runner who carries the mails across the plains.

If he is in earnest, the traveller will regard with suspicion the great trunk roads even as well as the railways. For officials pass daily up and down them, and wherever they are accustomed to pitch

their tents the villagers in the neighbourhood lose something for which the extra knowledge of the world which they acquire is not always an agreeable substitute. The traveller will be well advised to strike

A VILLAGE TEMPLE AND FORD, NORTH INDIA.

across country, choosing some half legible cart track for his guide, and, presently, he will find himself passing villages nestling in hollows at the foot of precipitous hills made up of huge blocks of granite which piled

one upon another form caves wherein the panther often makes his lair; villages on the banks of river channels, half-surrounded by a swamp of irrigated rice fields, and gradually, as he lumbers slowly along in his springless bullock cart, some instinct will tell him that his pilgrimage is at an end, that he has reached the heart of that mysterious life of India which is no older to-day than it was hundreds of years ago. Here he must be content to make his home. Let the traveller now begin to learn one of the many languages of India, the language of the particular district in which he finds himself exiled. Let him humble himself and, confessing his ignorance, sit at the feet of some Indian pundit who can quote proverbs by hundreds, lines of poetry by reams: some pundit who believes in spirits and devils and omens, and stories of heroes and heroines of most outrageous habits and appearance; and some day, if he is not too impatient, he will awake to find himself in fellowship and communion with the East.

It is to one of these villages that the reader must be introduced now. Around it there is what remains of a wall and a moat, and close by a watch tower. As a fortification the wall is now ludicrously inadequate. In many places it has fallen down altogether, and the stones have long since been carried away to build somebody's home. The watch tower is now probably only used for storing somebody's grain, while as for the moat, that is now filled up with a cactus growth called prickly pear (the haunt of the deadly cobra), the water that once flowed round the walls having long since been cut off at its source. Tower, moat and wall are now nothing more than relics of the past. Whatever else the British Government has done or has not done, it has at least rid the land of the bandit and the free company. No longer does Rajah war against Rajah. No longer is any famous

robber allowed to terrorize a whole district. Even the torch thieves, as they are called, who used to rise suddenly from a hole in the ground, as it were, and strip a rich man's house of everything valuable it contained, while a whole village, aroused from its sleep, gazed helplessly on, make only a very occasional appearance with their masks and flares now. In place of anarchy and chaos the British Government has certainly established law and order.

The old gateway in the wall remains, but it would now puzzle Bhima, the Samson of Indian mythology, to close the heavy doors, so rusty are the hinges, so clogged the old grooves.

A TRAVELLING CART.

The entrance to the village is just where it ever was. Men and women may make short cuts here from the fields through the gaps in the great wall, but cart traffic still rolls heavily along the old track and passes over the same old cobble stones now worn so smooth and slippery.

A little way inside the gate the road widens out into an open space, somewhere in which a tree, or, rather, two trees intertwined, will be growing in the middle of a square mound of earth about one and a half yards high, banked up by stones, flattened at the top and covered with slabs. This simple square mound is one of the most important

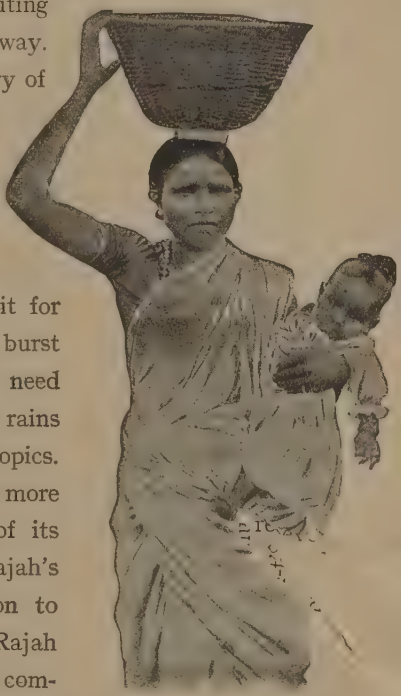
spots in the village. The trees it surrounds may almost be dignified by the use of the word sacred. Here it is that the people love to congregate and spend their leisure moments. For this purpose the late evening, after the day's work is over, is preferred, but somebody may be found here at any hour of the day.

All grades of society except the very lowest, the so-called Pariah, meet here. The Reddi (the headman), the Kurnum (the guardian of the land records and village accountant), the rich landowner and money-lender, the astrologer, the schoolmaster, the priest, the goldsmith, and the artisan class generally, all find their way here in the evening for a chat. Caste distinctions will not be obliterated. Different castes will display a tendency to group together, and, in the presence of the very highest castes, members of the lower will instinctively sit below the mound rather than on the top alongside. A slab of stone left lying in the roadway by a careless mason, the trunk of a tree brought from the fields by the carpenter for a purpose not yet realized, or the pole of some empty country cart, will, in that case, provide all the seat they require. But even so, if the different sections of [illegible]n society may ever be said to fraternize together, it is here [illegible] they do so, in the vicinity of this sacred tree.

And with what zest the conversation is sometimes carried on! The Reddi and the Kurnum have put away their returns and reports for the day. The money-lender and the merchant have closed their ledgers; the goldsmith has extinguished his charcoal fire; the weaver has laid aside his shuttle; the ryot has tethered his bullocks, and every one is free to talk.

It is only a village in the wilds, far away from the rush and roar of the centres of population, and yet life seems varied and interesting

enough for most of the villagers. Unless it be a young man who has learned a little English and has visited a great city at some time and caught a glimpse of possibilities never to be realized at home, no one seems to hanker after any fuller life than the village can offer. There always seems something exciting to talk about. Some one's wife has run away. Some one is to be sold up for the recovery of money lent him. Plague is hovering near—some one well known in the neighbourhood has died of it. A hyæna or panther has been seen. Some one has been bitten by a snake. A great priest on tour threatens the village with a visit for the collection of tribute. The repair of a burst reservoir not too far away which may need coolies. The prospects of the crops if the rains hold off much longer—there is no lack of topics.



MOTHER AND CHILD.

In this particular village they were more fortunate than many others, because of its proximity to the Rajah's State. The Rajah's affairs could always be depended upon to provoke discussion. But even without a Rajah to criticize no village in India need ever complain of monotony. Something is always happening in India.

Listen to the man who is relating a story which he has brought home with him from a visit he has just paid to some relation of his in a village in the adjoining District. It illustrates a danger to which

every listener is equally exposed, and the eyes of every one within hearing are fastened upon him.

"I saw the police taking him away, his wife and old mother following weeping. He would have got two years' imprisonment but for the wonderful discernment of the young Judge. The very constable to whom he was handcuffed knew he was innocent as well as I did—but who cared? He was only a Pariah. I was myself a witness of the robbery—that is, I saw the man's face for a moment as he dropped down from the tree that overhung the roof, but it was not the face of the Pariah. I recognized him at once. I had seen him often enough before, when he was a head constable in these parts. You all must have seen him. You ought to know him, Basappa—he nearly landed you in a scrape. It cost you fifty rupees to get out of it, they say. All his life he has been simply coining money. What cunning! But it became too dangerous at last for him here, so he got himself transferred to Tippapuram, where my relatives are. He became very useful to Gundappa the money-lender. The two together worked well in harness, and Gundappa paid him well for his services, they say. You must all have seen Gundappa's house—three stories high, with a [illegible] railed verandah on the second story. Thief-proof, he used to boast, but then he never dreamed a head constable would try to get in, a head constable who used to be in and out every day and knew Gundappa's house as well as he did his own. He chose his time well. It was the night after the festival. The women had been up late, and then had gone to bed so tired that they just laid their jewels down anywhere—all the head constable had to do was just to climb the tree and slip a bamboo through the window and take what he wanted. I came along just as he leaped down. He saw me, though he did not

recognize me, for I had my head wrapped up in my cloth. But I must have given him a fright, for he hastened to lay a false trail the very next day, and the Pariah would have paid the penalty had it not been for the wisdom of the young Judge. The Pariah was a known criminal—that made the task easier. One constable said he found a ring belonging to Gundappa in the yoke of the Pariah's plough. Another constable said he had seen the Pariah skulking about the street the night of the burglary. Yes, they were two of the head constable's subordinates, of course. Then two of the Pariah's own people who bore him a grudge for something, said they had heard some one rushing by their house panting for breath, and when they looked out they were just in time to see him disappear in his doorway.

"Oh! the evidence was well concocted, but the Judge dismissed the case on the ground that the evidence must have been manufactured, because it ran so smoothly. They say he got into trouble at the High Court in consequence, but the Pariah worships him—thinks he is Rama re-born.

"The next week the head constable was found by the roadside with his head broken in—the Pariah's work, of course, but never heard that they had proved anything against him."

The corruption of the official is a topic that can always be depended upon in India to provide food for conversation. The police in the East are supposed to be capable of any enormity. If that is true, the public are quite as much to blame, for the victim of a conspiracy to-day turns conspirator himself to-morrow, and, victim or conspirator, each bribes the police to help him. With the exception of the higher branches of the public services, officials generally are all believed to be utilizing the opportunities with which their positions

provide them for the sole purpose of enriching themselves. This suspicion, though current throughout India, cannot possibly be literally true, but even if it were, the public can hardly expect to be unreservedly pitied. It does not deserve a purer race of officials. The temptations it is known to place in the way of, perhaps, a poorly-paid officer would in time corrupt every one but the most high-minded.

It is a matter, therefore, for sincere rejoicing and legitimate pride that there is a certain class of Englishman in India who bear office for thirty years, perhaps, and then leave the country without a stain on their honour. It is the absolute incorruptibility of these men which has reconciled the Indian to a domination which, especially when wielded by men of inferior ability or character, must often gall them. There is also a certain number of native officials at work, concerning whom the villager says the last word when, with a shake of his wise old head, he confesses that the Tahsildar or the Magistrate is not one who eats bribes. No one forgets these men, but they are exceptions, says the Indian, and any reference under the sacred tree to the official is sure to let loose a flood of sinister reminiscences. This [illegible] off[illegible] was the case the evening we are speaking about. The story of the head constable who brought a false charge against the Pariah was hardly finished when some one else told a similar story, and, the range of interest widening, it became relevant for another man to relate the experience of an uncle of his who, for ten or fifteen years, had been paying rent upon twenty acres of land, only to discover in the end that all that time he had been enjoying the use of no more than eighteen. No one seemed to blame the uncle for stupidity. It was the cleverness of the official that constituted the charm of the story. Those two

A BULLOCK BANDY.

missing acres some one else had been paying for as well. Government received one man's rent all right, but the officer pocketed the other man's. That reminded some one else of a relative of his who last year had paid rent on his land without insisting upon receiving a receipt in return. The consequence was, of course, that the official referred to had denied receiving the money and was now dunning for payment. Here again the comments that followed would seem to show that the official alone was to be blamed. And so the conversation drifted on, until a young man whose appearance proclaimed the Brahmin and the student, and hinted at life in far-off great cities, intervened with a story which, the theme being not only the audacity of an official, but also the astuteness of a famous lawyer, held the crowd spell-bound till past midnight.

Everybody in India has either been or intends going to law. There is no more litigious person in the world than the native of India. The money expended over lawsuits must be appalling. Not all the expenditure is legitimate, by any means. Perjury and bribery are common enough, but none the less expensive. The profession most in demand is that of the lawyer, and the popular hero is the great lawyer, and some day the long list of incarnations of deity which are honoured in India to-day may be extended by the addition of a lawyer. Vishnu, for instance, has already taken upon himself the form of a fish, a turtle, a boar, a man-lion, a dwarf, in addition to appearing as Rama and Krishna. It is very remarkable that the idea of an incarnation as a lawyer should not yet have occurred to the religious writers. Perhaps it has. More things get talked about in India than always get reported in print.

The story which the young Brahmin (whose name, by the way, was Narayana) told narrates an adventure of an official called a Tahsildar. It is necessary, therefore, to explain the position a Tahsildar occupies.

As already mentioned, the great provinces of India are subdivided into areas which are called Districts. Those Districts are presided over by officials called Commissioners or Collectors of Revenue.

These men being nearly always of British birth, require assistants born in the country better accustomed to the ways and languages of the people. Consequently, each District is further subdivided into Taluqs (or counties) administered by such assistants, and it is they who are called Tahsildars.

If these men are willing to accept bribes, the amount of money they can sometimes make is well-nigh incredible, and if they care to exert it without scruple, their authority, especially when they happen

to be Brahmins as well as Tahsildars, makes them the terror of the area they rule over, and well worthy of the epithet the people often bestow upon them—the Tiger.

It is a pity that Narayana's story cannot be literally translated, but in that case the audience that reads it would not be so appreciative as the audience that heard it. But the following summary will not be altogether unjust either to the man who told the story, or to the man the story is about :—

Many a time his friends had expostulated with him on the risks he ran. "One foot in gaol, sir!" he would reply with a smile. And really, he seemed to bear a charmed life. His last exploit before misfortune overtook him was to send word round to the Reddi (the headman) of all the villages in his jurisdiction, demanding a hundred rupees from each as a gift.

He had long been the despair of the Service. Commissioner after Commissioner, with a detective staff to help him, had been stirred into activity by the rumours about him, but beyond the easy acquisition of a vast amount of experience in a few months which they would probably have failed to acquire elsewhere in as many years, even the most optimistic felt they had gained little.

From the very beginning the Tahsildar's personality had arrested every one's attention. Did a company of ryots, all crowded into one small cart, on their way to some distant market, find the long journey wearisome? Some one had only to mention the Tahsildar's name, and the milestones seemed to race by. Were the men folk ever unusually late for the evening meal? The reason was that while gathered around the great tree in the village square discussing their small politics

in that bewitching hour when the moon and the breeze rise together, some one had been relating the latest incident in the Tahsildar's fascinating career, and all consciousness of hunger had vanished in the interest of the subject. But at last the inevitable happened. How, no one quite knew. Either the gods had grown envious of the Tahsildar's fame, or he had grown just a little too contemptuous of the official forces silently watching him. Anyhow, the hitherto invulnerable master of all finesse at last found himself with his other foot in gaol, and a notorious if not great career seemed to have come to a premature and undignified close.

Of course he was chagrined, but, otherwise, his fall did not seem to trouble him as it would other men. Gaol is not a pleasant residence for any man, but its hardships are not altogether beyond endurance when tempered by the resources of a trained diplomatist whose wealth, even if he were called upon to settle a big fine, would still need six figures for its computation. Moreover, the Tahsildar possessed a very vivid and powerful mind. Whenever that was adequately employed no one was so indifferent as he to external circumstances.

The fact is that day by day and far into the night he was engrossed by a problem so fascinating that the routine of prison life, severe as it would have been to most men of his antecedents, was for him but a mechanical performance which he could accomplish almost automatically. Every faculty he possessed was absorbed by a tremendous craving, a certain imperious instinct, inherited from generations of like-minded men, the desire to "save his face." Though a man of many passions, no emotion was to be compared with this for pure intensity. It must not be confounded with anything so simple and

explicable as the desire for revenge. A word like that would not describe what he wanted at all adequately.

He knew quite well how his misfortune, as he called it, had happened. With his experience of men and things he could almost follow the informer's movements as he approached the Commissioner's tent in the gathering dusk, and drawing that officer away into a quiet and

FORT GATE, ANJENGO, TRAVANCORE.

solitary corner in the clump of trees where the tents were pitched, gave him the clue which ultimately betrayed the Tahsildar. He could discern, as he sat brooding in his cell, the Commissioner's grin of ill-concealed glee as he listened to the exposure, and realized that a long-cherished hope had at last been realized. He could see the Commissioner's grim satisfaction expressing itself in every triumphant movement of the pen that worked out that skilful indictment from which even the

Tahsildar could not extricate himself. He would have given half his wealth could he have humbled the pride of the chief whom he had in public so often garlanded and in private so often mocked. And as for the informer—not only would he have devoted the remainder of his fortune to that man's destruction; he would in addition have cheerfully immersed himself, his sons, his grandsons and his great-grandsons in overwhelming debt (were money all that was required for the purpose) if he could but get the informer stretched upon a rack. He wanted revenge badly enough. Of that there is no doubt. But he wanted something more. His complicated mind was bent upon "saving his face." His world must be made to see that it had made a huge mistake in ever connecting the idea of defeat with the famous Tahsildar. By some splendid display of ability it must be made to feel that if men had only had the sense to look beneath the surface of things, they might have guessed that at the end of the day their hero would always come out on top—the uppermost dog in any fight.

Thus brooding, the long months passed away, and one day the disgraced ex-Tahsildar found himself free in that village again whence he had for so long practically ruled the whole country around. No more would he hold the sceptre of authority. He was now a deposed King, but no one made the mistake of underestimating his resources. He had been fined, imprisoned and dismissed the service, but no one saluted him any the less humbly.

The informer lived not very far away, and sometimes the two would meet in the street. When that happened it was always broad daylight. After dark the informer preferred running the risk of suffocation in his almost hermetically sealed house to certain other dangers outside. It was not a happy life he lived. His swagger was

the merest pretence and deceived no one, and as the weeks passed without the blow falling of which he thought by day and dreamed by night, he began to find life intolerable and, in his fear of the taciturn ex-Tahsildar, to meditate flight.

Then the long-delayed event happened which the neighbours had been expecting—and the informer's voice has never been heard again by wife or child. A headless body was found floating on the surface of one of the informer's own wells, and every one jumped at the conclusion that at last the Tahsildar was revenged. The police arrived, and quickly realizing that the case was far too important for any of that manipulation in which they are supposed to be such adepts, arrested the ex-Tahsildar on suspicion, who thus found himself a second time in gaol. The relatives of the informer spent money lavishly. Evidence that could not possibly be ignored, whatever its intrinsic value, was soon forthcoming. The defence, to every one's astonishment, was found to be irrelevant and ineffectual to the last degree, and the strong nerves of the ex-Tahsildar were soon tested to the uttermost by the sound of a stern voice sentencing him to death.

The news spread far and wide. Wherever men gathered together, inside the village rest-house, at the fording of the river, beneath the sacred tree in the village square, nothing else was talked about but the second and this time unaccountable folly of the ex-Tahsildar, and the curious feature of all these informal conferences was that, while no one regretted the death of the informer, or let fall one word of pity for his widow and children, every one seemed to resent the ex-Tahsildar's fall as a personal affront. The reason is obvious. The long-venerated idol had been proved to possess feet of clay. The first time the great man had fallen into trouble he had been forgiven

for the sake of the splendid audacity which had for so long characterized him, and rendered some sort of catastrophe inevitable; but the murder had been so clumsily perpetrated, and the guilt of it had been so ill-concealed, that most men began to think that for all these years their homage had been too easily yielded. They began to wonder, in short, whether their hero-worship had not been sheer credulity—a disgrace to every one who had proffered it.

There remained, however, a small minority not quite so hasty. Probably they knew the ex-Tahsildar's history more intimately than did "the man in the street." Their admiration, unlike his, was based upon accurate knowledge of the ex-Tahsildar's ability and cunning, and not upon the myths of the bazaars.

The prisoner was known to have appealed against his conviction, and this small minority felt it would be only prudent to await the result of that appeal before revising their long-cherished opinion about him. They knew their man too well to believe that the ridiculously puerile defence offered before the local District Judge was the limit of all that it was possible for him to have made. They could not avoid the suspicion that he was holding himself in restraint, preferring a larger theatre, desiring to produce a greater effect, before making the crowning effort of his life. Meanwhile, the distinguished prisoner spent most of his time sitting cross-legged upon the floor of his cell wrapped in silent meditation, without apparently a single care. He had engaged a Pleader of world-wide reputation, but only one communication was known to have passed between them, and what the nature of that was he was careful to conceal, along with many other secrets, in his own breast.

In due time the appeal came on for hearing. When the moment

arrived for the famous Pleader to rise, the speech the Court listened to on behalf of the ex-Tahsildar ran something like this :—

He admitted at once that two things had happened which might possibly be superficially regarded as suspicious, because they had both happened about the same time. In the first place, a man named Naga Reddi (the informer) had suddenly disappeared from a place in which he had lived all his life, without taking any public farewell of his neighbours, or in any way acquainting them with his future residence. In the second place, a headless body had been discovered in one of the missing man's wells, which, while we are told it strongly resembled that of Naga Reddi, might just as well, for aught the Court knew, resemble his (the Pleader's) own, or that of hundreds of other men. Now he need hardly point out that this coincidence did not by any means prove any connexion between the body in the well and the missing Naga Reddi. Certainly some one had recently died, because his trunk had been discovered. But what induced sensible men to jump at the conclusion that that trunk belonged to the missing Naga Reddi he could not for the life of him imagine. It is the head of a man that alone differentiates one man from another if they resemble each other at all in stature and physique. It is the head alone, there-

WEAVERS.

fore, that can be depended upon to furnish us with any reliable assistance towards anything like satisfactory identification—a fact, the Pleader significantly said, which Naga Reddi had overlooked.

Here the Court woke up. It perceived the case was not quite so simple as it looked. Naga Reddi might be alive after all. Stranger things had happened than that. The Court foresaw that the line of defence was worth considering.

The case for the prosecution, continued the ex-Tahsildar's Pleader, seemed to be something like this: The dead body must be that of the missing Naga Reddi, because otherwise nobody could say whose it was. Since the dead body must be that of the missing Naga Reddi, the person who caused his death must be his (the counsel's) client, because otherwise it would not be possible to say who the murderer was. In the history of the Court, had their lordships ever heard such an argument before? Such a summary method of disposing of their crime sheet might lighten the labour of the police, but it would never further the ends of justice.

Now, his client had for many years belonged to a class of officials whose devotion to the interests of Government was generally estimated in inverse proportion to their popularity. Unfortunately, it would seem that wherever the loyal Tahsildar goes he must of necessity excite hostility. His client was no exception to this rule. Never fearing unpopularity, he had certainly never escaped it. Naturally a strong character, his official duties had made him more rugged than ever. After a long and until the end a spotless career, his client, in a moment of inadvertence, had overstepped the rigid limits of official propriety, and had committed some departmental error which Naga Reddi, the man supposed to be murdered, who had ever been one of

his most implacable foes, brought to the notice of Government. The importance of the slip, owing to the head of the District being young and inexperienced, was considerably and needlessly exaggerated. No consideration was accorded to past services, which, admittedly, were of a valuable character, and his client was compelled to suffer the profound humiliation of a period of imprisonment.

VILLAGE STREET (SOUTH INDIA).

At first Naga Reddi was delighted. The object of his detestation had been brought low, and his had been the hand that had humbled him. But not long did his despicable satisfaction endure. He could not but remember the resolute character of the man he had disgraced, and his heart began to fail him. Indeed, his life soon became altogether embittered by his fears. Night and day

he was ever pondering over the revenge which the man he had injured would take as soon as he was released from prison and found an opportunity. So long as his client remained in gaol, continued the Pleader, Naga Reddi was comparatively happy, but no sooner had he reappeared after his release in his old Taluq, where he intended to end his days and live down his disgrace, than Naga Reddi, whose residence it also was, became overwhelmed by terror. Indeed, to all intents and purposes he became a monomaniac, imbued with a notion, which nothing could dispel, that the ex-Tahsildar was ever meditating and planning revenge. Whose body it was that had been found it was not for him (the Pleader) to say. How the deceased came by his end was not altogether, perhaps, certain. There was but one man living who could fully enlighten the Court on these points, and he had disappeared. But discover this man, this Naga Reddi; wrest the truth from his lips, and the Court would find its problem solved. It would have laid bare before it a conspiracy as diabolical as ever was hatched—a conspiracy which might be branded as sacrilegious, since the object of it was to procure the innocent but effectual co-operation of a court of law in a coward's project to remove for ever from the land of the living this man—my client, said the Pleader—whose presence in his vicinity he so dreaded and hated. What more easy, thought Naga Reddi, than to procure the corpse of a man whose trunk resembled his own, to decapitate it and destroy the head that would frustrate his plans, and then, having, of course, prepared beforehand a way of escape, to disappear for a time from a scene he had begun to loathe, leaving behind him, as he thought, sufficient material to excite in the minds of the police that terrible suspicion which, he hoped, would rid him of the object of his insane fears for ever?

Mopping his brow, the learned Pleader then sought the most energetic punkah, and took his seat, evidently well pleased with himself, and confident that his heavy fee had been fully earned. The speech had not been a very long one. What the Court really thought of it, no one knows, but it shrank from the responsibility of confirming the sentence of the District Judge. The theory of the ex-Tahsildar's Pleader might well cover the facts of the case. Things quite as strange, quite as inhuman, were being brought to their notice almost every day, and so they released the ex-Tahsildar.

Naga Reddi has not yet reappeared, and no one expects him. It may possibly be true that he is alive, but it is evident that his relatives do not believe he is. They are just playing havoc with his property.

As for the ex-Tahsildar, his power in the country is greater than ever, and he has long since ceased to miss his merely official position. For many years now he has devoted his vast powers to the lucrative profession of a money-lender. There are few men for many miles round who do not contribute to his ever-increasing wealth by the periodic payment to him of what he humorously calls interest. Could any one, however, read his mind, I think he would find that the brightness of his old age is due not so much to his wealth as to the satisfaction he derives from recalling that epoch in his career when, on the verge of ruin, he succeeded so triumphantly in "saving his face."

At the conclusion of this story there was a few moments' silence, and then Narayana and his audience rose and sought their homes and their belated evening meal.

"Did he really murder Naga Reddi?" asked a friend as they parted for the night.

"Of course he did," replied Narayana.

CHAPTER III

THE TYRANT OF THE HOUSEHOLD

THE name of the village where we made the acquaintance of Narayana, or Narayanamurti as he ought to be called if we want to give him his full name, is Mungondagrahally. We shall not have to use this word very often, it is to be hoped, but it may be convenient later on if the reader can remember it. Here Narayana was born, and here his parents had always lived. Narayana at this time was a schoolmaster in the large town some two or three days' journey away. He had come home for a short holiday. His young wife was living with his parents.

It is not the custom in India when sons marry for them to set up separate establishments. It does not matter how many of them there may be, if they can possibly find room, and if their young wives can make shift to tolerate each other's company, and submit to their husband's mother, they all live under the same roof. Economy is one reason for so uncomfortable an arrangement; the dissensions which would probably arise out of any attempt to divide up the property and separate being another. Now in Narayana's home there were living—

Lakshmi Narayana, his father.
Yashodamma, his mother.
Satyawati, his wife.

Venkatesha, his older brother.
Sundaramma, his older brother's wife, and
Ramanujamma, their little daughter and therefore his niece.
Ramaswami, Subramaniah, } his younger brothers.
Savitri, Site, } his younger sisters.

The list is given here for future reference. An English reader may easily get confused, and begin to wonder who is who in a history such as is being unfolded here.

Lakshmi Narayana's chief characteristic was an unnaturally mild disposition, that relegated him to a position in his own family so subordinate that he was hardly ever thought of or referred to as Lakshmi Narayana. He was Yashodamma's husband—that and nothing more. Messengers sent to him from a distance were always directed to save

MISSIONARIES CROSSING A STREAM.

time and breath by inquiring straight away for the house of Yashodamma. So unfamiliar, indeed, had the use of his name grown, that any one asking for Lakshmi Narayana would, without the slightest doubt, be sent to another man of that name living at the opposite end of the village.

This fact alone should make any description of Yashodamma unnecessary. Her reputation had spread far and wide, even, to quote her critics, into regions invisible. Strong men quailed before her, and women thought it no shame to give advice to their legs, as they would say, and flee, whenever there was a likelihood of running against her in close quarters. Women of inferior caste, who happened to be filling their waterpots from a hole in the sandy bed of some watercourse, would hastily fling their cocoanut scoops down and rise to their feet with their arms stretched harmlessly above their heads whenever they saw her approaching them. And they would stand immovable in that posture as though they were turned to stone until she passed safely by, rather than incur any risk of flicking a drop of water upon her, or of giving her the opportunity of saying that they had. Boys bathing in the great reservoir, where the rain water stores itself up, catching sight of Yashodamma on the bank would scatter like frightened water-fowl, and swim frantically off until they got out of hearing. Fretful little children could always be hushed to silence if their mothers did but look solemn, hold up a finger and say, "Take care, be quiet; Yashodamma is coming. If you make this noise, I will give you away to her."

Venkatesha, the eldest son, was about twenty-seven years old. What little education he had received was of the old-fashioned sort, which, while teaching him to read and to work out a few very elemen-

tary rules in arithmetic, left his imagination at the mercy of literature either injurious to his morals or unintelligible to his intellect. Of modern science or history, past or current, he had, perhaps, never formed a notion. Still, by virtue of his handwriting and his knowledge of figures, he obtained a situation in a neighbouring village as clerk to the Kurnum. The salary was not large, but it sufficed to keep him and his small family in comfort as long as they lived with the old people. His wife, Sundaramma, for a wonder could also read, and read fairly well. Whether that was the reason or not one cannot say, but she was much more of a companion to her husband than he had any right to expect. If it had not been for Yashodamma their life would not have been at all unhappy. Their little girl, Rananujamma, was a little over two years old.

Narayana was the hope of the family. Of great intelligence and of a very sweet disposition, from his earliest years ambition had been his master passion, and he had grudged no hardship, spared no pains, to realize the dreams of his boyhood. When still very young, without saying a word to any one, he had run away to a distant town where there was a famous school in which English was taught. His maintenance, until he grew old enough to take pupils, was provided by wealthy Brahmins, according to the custom of the country which enables any ambitious but impecunious lad to apply for such help without sacrificing any self-respect. He had become a head-master in time in a Government School, but the goal he was aiming at was a certain legal examination. He intended settling down in life as a Pleader, and after and before school hours, every spare minute was devoted to his legal studies. His wife's name was Satyawati. They had not been married long. She was living with his parents at the time we

make her acquaintance. They were both far too modern to regard this arrangement as ideal, but until he had passed the examination for which he was working like a galley slave, and had established himself somewhere as a lawyer, it would have been quite impossible to live otherwise. Satyawati's father was a Government official of fairly high rank, and, what was of far greater importance so far as Satyawati is concerned, was in politics what we should call a Progressive, a Reformer. The education he had given Satyawati was quite unusually thorough, and well fitted her to become the wife of a man like Narayana. The ordinary literature in vogue in India, in the villages that is, had been kept from her, for when it is not puerile it is too often obscene. It can do no one any good, and, generally speaking, the character of any one addicted to reading it must necessarily deteriorate.

The books her father placed in her hands were chiefly biographies of the good and great, and such science primers as he thought she ought to see. It is more than likely, too, that she had read portions of the Bible. But whether that is so or not, her father had read at least some portions of the Gospels and Psalms, and as he liked nothing better, when he had an evening to spare, than to tell his daughter stories with which his reading in three languages had well furnished his mind, it is more than probable that she knew some considerable portion of the teaching of Jesus. Anyhow, she had early formed a habit of praying when in distress to God as Father.

A training like this not only fitted her to be the wife of a rising man like Narayana, it also enabled her to endure with more patience than she otherwise would the very trying position she had to occupy for a time in Yashodamma's household—her husband's mother's house. If she

had been no wiser, no more disciplined, than the ordinary daughter-in-law, instead of trying to do what she could to reduce friction, she would have watched for opportunities to increase it. When one thinks of the number of old women like Yashodamma in India, one wonders less at the number of quarrels in houses where so many people live together, than at the amount of harmony which on the whole prevails.

From photo by] [REV. J. I. MACNAIR.

A FORTIFIED GATE.

But the reader had better accompany Narayana home, after he has finished his story about the ex-Tahsildar in the village square, and remain in the house for a few days, an invisible but observant spectator. He will learn a good deal more that way than by reading reams of mere description.

Upon entering the house it occurred to Narayana that he had not yet seen Sundaramma, his brother's wife. "Where is she?" he asked

Satyawati. "She doesn't usually fail to welcome me like this when I come home for the holidays."

"She is inside," replied his wife. "This morning your mother got angry with her for some reason, and Sundaramma flew into a passion, and threw herself down in a corner, where she is lying now with her head muffled up. She hasn't stirred even to take food. Not a mouthful has passed her lips the whole day. I have begged her to get up and eat something, but she won't listen to me. Perhaps if you tried to persuade her you might succeed."

"Oh, these quarrels! they ruin everything," said Narayana. "But where is little Ramanujamma?"

"She has been fretting all the day almost, but she went to bed just before you came in. It was she who caused the upset. A woman came to the door with a little boy on her arm, and after chatting with her for a few minutes your mother noticed the boy, and said, 'I don't know how it is, but everybody else has boys in their families except this miserable creature of a daughter-in-law of mine. Surely she is under a curse (and small wonder if she be) with that girl of hers—born, without doubt, to be a disgrace to us all. A girl! Think of it. It was my son's fate to marry such a wife, else he never would have done it.' Sundaramma, of course, heard your mother, and came running out in a tearing rage. 'What have I done? Your son is Ramanujamma's father, anyhow,' she shouted; and that is how the scene began. I could do nothing to pacify them."

"They have always been like that," said Narayana, sadly. "They fall foul of each other on the least provocation. If one is not to blame it is the other. Then they fling themselves into a corner and refuse to eat till they get ill. Then some one has to do

or say something to heal their wounded feelings. What nonsense! because little Ramanujamma is a girl, is that any reason why she should come to a bad end. Woman, man—one is wanted just about as much as the other. But poor Sundaramma! the poor girl isn't strong. She can't afford to fast like this. Let us see what we can do," said Narayana, and, followed by his wife, he stepped over to the place where Sundaramma was lying.

"Amma! Amma!" called Satyawati, stooping over Sundaramma. "Look up and see who has come to speak to you," and she withdrew a little the sheet that covered Sundaramma's head.

Sundaramma roused herself, looked for a moment into Satyawati's face, then closed her eyes and half wrapped her head up again.

Then Narayana tried to induce her to speak, pulling the cloth away once more. "Amma! Have you forgotten me? Is this the way you welcome me home? Don't you even care to ask how I am? I may be ill, for aught you know."

Sundaramma could not even yet bring herself to speak, but she opened her eyes again on hearing her brother-in-law's voice, and that encouraged Narayana to use a little force. Himself taking one hand and his wife the other, they raised her up and got her seated before some food, which, after a little hesitation, she attacked with such vigour that soon there was nothing left but the leaf that served as a plate.

"Well," said Narayana, "you are a magician. For how long have you been restraining an appetite like this? This is sheer conjuring, to make a heap of food vanish as you have done in a few seconds."

At this Sundaramma condescended to smile, and the bruised heart

thus acknowledging their sympathy, Narayana and Satyawati, after a few pleasant words, left her to a night of repose.

That day was the first that the people of Mungondagrahally had ever seen Narayana and Satyawati in each other's company. It has already been indicated that they both belonged to the new order. Some unconventionality in their greetings must have shocked somebody, because next day there was hardly a woman to be found anywhere who did not make one of a group of scandalized matrons discussing Satyawati's conduct. At the mouth of the well, in the semi-darkness of some kitchen, wherever women met, there they remained, gesticulating, shaking their heads solemnly at each other, adding point to some cryptic remark by a mysterious movement of a finger to the side of the nose. The whole female population seemed fairly intoxicated with righteous indignation. And what was Satyawati's particular offence? She had actually spoken to her husband in broad daylight. Said one critic, "These are evil days we have fallen on. The end of the world can't be far off now. Yashodamma's daughter-in-law has had the audacity to hold a conversation with her husband before her own father-in-law." Said another: "Such a thing can never have happened before anywhere. What you say is right. The world is on the very brink of destruction." Said a third: "Does any one think that this sort of thing is going to stop here? The rising generation will be infected, and soon there will not be a young wife left anywhere with any veneration for her husband's parents." "Ah," said a fourth, shivering with indignation, "in my time a girl that dared to stand and open her mouth in her husband's presence in the daytime would not have lived long to repeat the performance." Said a fifth: "If Yashodamma were like me she would

soon break the girl's spirit." And finally, a sixth wise woman, lifted for a moment by the gravity of the occasion out of the ordinary colloquial, satisfied everybody by summing up in this fashion: That if this sort of thing had happened in the good old days a girl so shameless would have been felled to the ground as a tree that is struck by lightning. They would have pulled her to pieces, torn her limb from limb

FILLING WATER CARTS.

This being the feeling of the village, it may be imagined without much effort what the thoughts of Yashodamma were. Briefly expressed, they came to this, that Satyawati was a disgrace to her sex, that she didn't see how Satyawati was ever going to walk down the street or lift up her head in public again, but that so far from feeling any remorse, Yashodamma very much feared that a girl so shameless would probably rejoice in the scandal she had caused.

Yashodamma was placed in a quandary, however, and her fiery spirit chafed under the difficulty. She agreed with every word the village was saying, but she resented the presumption involved in the fact that the person criticized was a member of her own family. It irritated her to think that, knowing this, the neighbours should not have moderated their language. Instead, it was obvious they rather relished the situation. Yashodamma strongly suspected that, having suffered so often themselves under the lash of that tongue of hers, which spared neither young nor old, rich nor poor, they were only too delighted at the opportunity of retaliating which Satyawati had placed in their hands. And yet what could she do? Was not the conceit of her youngest daughter-in-law perfectly insufferable? But here the keen eye of Yashodamma fell upon a book only half concealed, and indecision, irresolution, perplexity troubled her no more. The sight of that book decided her. Satyawati was that most unnatural monster, a reading woman. It was, therefore, futile to expect any repentance or amendment. Her views had become hopelessly corrupt, and her life henceforth would be nothing better than a standing menace to propriety and good order. And Yashodamma made up her mind on the spot that where the village chastised with whips, she would use scorpions.

Poor Yashodamma! a book in the hands of a woman excited her to the pitch of fury. Some instinct had told her that a great struggle was impending in the near future, if it had not begun already; a struggle which was to decide between the long established tyranny of the husband's mother and the recently asserted claims of the husband's wife—who was to be the mistress of the home. And she resented the attack on the old order, and was convinced that if it had not been for books it would never have been made.

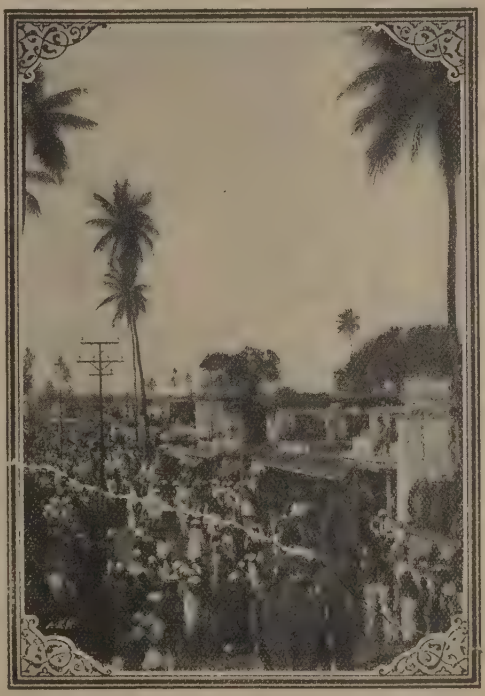
Looking round about her upon the many child-wives of the village, it was not their need of education that appealed to Yashodamma. It was their need of a mother-in-law. She knew of nothing to protect them from themselves—their unwisdom and inexperience—but the wisdom and experience of age. It never occurred to her that if girls were taught to read, they might acquire a certain amount of knowledge, if not wisdom, for themselves, and not be quite so dependent upon age. She could not read herself, and had not the remotest idea what the contents of books were, but she suspected that the reading of books encouraged insubordination, and that was quite enough to determine her attitude towards Satyawati. The impertinence of the women of the village in criticizing anything or any one belonging to her was very distasteful to her, but Satyawati's habit of reading was far more offensive. That was a crime, and the sight of that book in her house rallied her to the side of the village in its condemnation of poor Satyawati. Henceforth whenever she came across a book Yashodamma would tear it up and fling the pieces into the street. Whenever she discovered Satyawati in the act of reading, not only was the book confiscated but the reader was savagely abused. "It is no wonder that the neighbours are always talking about the girl," she would say to herself. "She never plays an innocent game with them. She never sits down with them for a friendly chat. She is either reading or sewing." And then Yashodamma would quote proverbs to herself, such as this: "The illiterate man and the literate woman are both lost souls" (which sounds very futile in English, but like Scripture in the vernacular), or one more luminous still to the effect that "the male cook and the female scholar are alike hopeless." Proverbs failed to make any impression upon Satyawati, so she would try sarcasm, and ask her

whether she expected to be made a Minister of State or a Member of Council. But in the end Yashodamma would always revert to the language of invective, and declare that because Satyawati was addicted to reading she, her mother-in-law, poor timid soul, was ashamed to look people in the face.

It was extraordinary how patiently Satyawati endured all this. Never a word passed her lips. She would just bow her head till the storm passed, content if during the day, when the old woman took her siesta, or late at night after she had gone to bed, she could steal an hour to herself with a book.

But her demeanour in her husband's presence and her modest scholarship were not the only complaints brought against the girl. The village, and of course Yashodamma, had something else to say. Her novel ideas about cleanliness, or as we should say hygiene, offended them. It could hardly be said that she obtruded those ideas upon any one. She was not allowed to do more than put them into practice in the limited area of her own room and her own person, but that was quite enough to distinguish her from other women, and an unconventionality is resented by some people as much as an actual crime. And in this respect she was not so much to blame as her father, with her good mother to support him. Little did he know when he put into her hands as a girl such books as the *Sukha*, etc., and the *Arogya*, etc., what he was doing. For the result of the study of them was that she acquired the habit of airing her bed-clothes and of whitewashing the walls of her room. She became prejudiced in favour of fresh air, and grew restive in the neighbourhood of dust-bins and rubbish heaps, and she washed clothes before they became irretrievably soiled, and objected to drinking water that was not comparatively fresh and sweet.

Every day she would rinse and scour and polish cooking vessels till they glittered like glass in the sun, and in all sorts of ways waged war against dirt and disorder. The result was that in consequence of the precautions she observed not only were her small quarters preserved remarkably free from all sorts of creeping, crawling, flying pests; but she herself in her own person became conspicuous for neatness and cleanliness. But the appreciation of some good things in life requires education, and the poor uninstructed women round about her had not been educated. So they only acted according to their light when they charged her with conceit, and nicknamed her the "fine lady," and the "great Queen," etc.



SCENE IN BANGALORE.

Even so criticism was not exhausted. Irreligion was attributed to her because she objected to certain ceremonies and austerities which, she declared, had nothing to do with religion at all. "What relation

is there between fasting and faith?" she would ask. "Going without food only made people irritable." So on the days set apart for fasting she refused to comply. Neither did she believe that the custom which required her to wear damp clothing could be pleasing to God, since it was such a fruitful source of rheumatism. And as for the idea that the person who bathed in ice-cold water in the open air did something religiously significant, she simply refused to discuss it. For herself she could afford hot water, and hot water she had. She used to say that the worship of God in the silence and privacy of the heart was the one thing needful for her, and these other things were irrelevant. Nay, they were worse, they impeded the growth of the soul, and people needed to be told over and over again, in the words of their own scripture, that "torturing the skin didn't do away with sin." Now Yashodamma and her friends laid great stress upon the importance of ritual and ceremony, and Satyawati's neglect of these exasperated them. Yashodamma filled the house with clamour and abuse, and foretold the time when, as a result of her daughter-in-law's impiety, the whole household would be left without anything to eat save the bread of the outcaste. Perhaps the New Testament could have helped Satyawati to dissent more gracefully, but that is a nice point, one that can only be discussed by those who have found themselves at some time in Satyawati's position. It may be doubted, however, whether St. Paul himself could have pleased the old lady.

But the list of Satyawati's faults may here be brought to a close if we notice just one other. As things went in those parts, Satyawati's father was regarded as a man with a fairly large income, and he used every month to send his daughter a small remittance. If she had been like many other young women in her position, Satyawati would

have spent this money on sweetmeats or various kinds of ornaments for the head or neck, ears or nose, wrists or ankles. A cheap kind of pearl would have been a favourite extravagance. But, instead, she was constantly buying some small article of clothing for her poor relations, and in time of scarcity she would make an additional contribution towards household expenses. Once or twice, when she learned that her husband felt the need of certain expensive books in his studies, she would order them for him through the nearest Post Office. And being ignorant of the danger which lies, they say, in promiscuous almsgiving, whenever she came into touch with poverty and disease she could never refrain from giving small coins away in relief.

Now, though Yashodamma herself profited occasionally by this disposition of Satyawati, she was always finding fault with it. It appeared to her that Satyawati was always striving to be different from everybody else, original, eccentric, ostentatious. And as Yashodamma never concealed her feelings, Satyawati heard herself addressed occasionally as the daughter of a Nawab, and heard her small income described as bloated wealth.

CHAPTER IV

A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

ONE day, towards the end of Narayana's holiday, a baby was expected in Yashodamma's household, and, as is usual on these occasions, a nurse had to be sent for. Sundaramma, being the mother, presumed to lie up in the child's interests. Venkatesha, her husband, was the special messenger dispatched to bring the nurse. Narayana went with him, although after several years' residence in a great city he had grown too familiar with the neat uniform and scientific ways of Government hospital nurses to feel anything but disgust for the weird old crone, Nagamma by name, who practised in Mungondagrahally.

Nagamma was about eighty years old. Where she had originally come from nobody seemed to know.

Nagamma lived in a small hovel about a mile and a half from Yashodamma's house. It was by no means clean. Indeed, it was decidedly dirty, and all that could be said in its favour was that it was no dirtier than its owner. What she knew about babies no one ever attempted to inquire, but she could mutter a spell or two over them which were supposed to exercise some beneficial influence, and so she was regarded as a woman of wisdom. And the older she grew the more ghastly her appearance became. The fewer teeth she retained in her mouth the less intelligible became the pronunciation

of her spells. But what would have handicapped a woman in any other profession made no difference to Nagamma. She had grown very old, but in spite of her weird appearance, her feeble trembling limbs, and her sullen and sometimes savage temper, her reputation for wisdom had never been higher than it was the day that the two brothers called and found her sitting bent double upon her filthy floor, smoking a coarse cheroot as black as coal.

A LADY OF BANGALORE.

Till that cheroot was finished no entreaty succeeded in moving her hand or foot. She sat on silently gazing with unwinking eyes into the glowing heart of a small brazier of charcoal in which, hot though the night was, she seemed to find a comfort. Then rising with an effort, as though every movement of her old bones gave her pain, she moved across her room, tipped an unspeakably dirty rope bedstead on its side against the wall, tied a few herbs in a fold of her cloth, wrapped herself up in a blanket which the reader would hesitate, perhaps, to touch with a walking-stick, and indicated her readiness to start. The door

was being closed after her when an owl hooted in a tree close at hand. Nagamma reopened the door and entered the house again. "Bad omen," she muttered, and reseated herself on the floor, paying about as much attention to Venkatesha, who raved at her and the owl alternately for the next ten minutes, as if he were a hundred miles away. At length the time elapsed which the old woman seemed to think robbed the owl's cry of its evil significance, and she rose again and once more started, and the party made its way down the dark street as hurriedly as Nagamma, who cursed every stone in the road and grumbled at every step she took, would allow.

"You must stay on with us a little longer now," said Venkatesha to his brother, as they impatiently kept pace with Nagamma.

"No," replied Narayana, "I must leave to-morrow."

"Well, then, wait till they give the wife food again."

"Why, how long will that be?"

"When the baby is three days old, of course."

"Do you mean to say that your wife will be kept three days without food?"

"Yes, and without drink too. Why not? Such is the custom."

"But it is absurd," said Narayana, "it is wicked. It will kill her."

"Ah," replied Venkatesha irritably, "there speaks your English tongue. How often am I to tell you that this English learning of yours will be the ruin of you. What do the English know about doctoring? All they can do is use a knife and probe and cut and hack."

"Very well," said Narayana, anxious to change a subject he was weary of, "I will wait. But," he cried, coming to a standstill, as a thought suddenly occurred to him, "you won't let them put Sundar-

VILLAGE WOMEN.

amma into that black hole at the back, will you? Think of the atmosphere there. If you do," he continued, detecting a movement of impatience, "you won't let them close up the place as they did last time, will you?" And Narayana tried to describe the silence and cleanliness and ventilation of some of the great hospitals he had seen. But it was wasted labour.

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Venkatesha. "Fresh air? Why, it would kill the child. You know as well as I that a door open but an eighth of an inch would let troops of devils in to strangle the child. The room will just have to be kept shut, and even then for ten days the women will need to have a hundred eyes. Do you think Nagamma doesn't know? Who are we, that we should pretend to be wiser than she?"

Narayana made no reply. The prejudices of hundreds of years

were arrayed against him, and he realized the futility of any protest, and in silence the three arrived at the house. The first thing Nagamma did was to wash her hands. They needed washing badly enough, but she was doubtless inspired by a ceremonial idea rather than any craving for personal cleanliness. She also substituted a new cloth for the old disreputable one she had come in. But again it would be rash to credit her with any sanitary motive. Yashodamma gave her the cloth as part payment of her wages, and doubtless Nagamma wanted to make sure of it. Then she soaked a few of the herbs she had brought with her, muttered an incantation over them, and sent them in to Sundaramma.

Now the little room in which Sundaramma and her little baby were secluded adjoined that of Satyawati. It had two doors. One opened on to a back yard and one opened into the interior of the house. The back door was kept locked day and night. The other was opened only for some one's egress or ingress, and was protected by a heavy screen which Yashodamma had hung up as a precaution against the little devils Venkatesha had spoken to his brother about, who might possibly take it into their wicked little heads to squeeze in with a visitor.

The temperature at night under the roof of the verandah outside reached 100°. What it was in Sundaramma's room none but those who have had to sleep indoors in India in the hot weather can possibly imagine. It is little use quoting figures.

But it was not the temperature that Sundaramma had most to complain about. She could have endured that without a murmur. Her great trouble was the impurity of the air she had to breathe. For,

as if human perversity had set itself the task of making Sundaramma as uncomfortable as possible, garlic, the leaves of certain trees, and an old shoe had been introduced into the room, and the characteristic odour of each, by the time the room had been closed for twenty-four hours, began to assert itself. Was there no window? some one asks.

INDIAN GIRLS' SCHOOL.

No, not one. There was a hole in the roof, which on other occasions acted as a chimney, but a round earthen pot which exactly fitted had been inserted therein.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that occasional visitors, callous though they were from habit and custom, retired disgusted and bathed

in perspiration after the shortest possible stay. And it is still less wonder, perhaps, that hideous little insects, those that crawl and those that fly, began to converge upon a scene so congenial, in such shapes and sizes as to give rise to a suspicion in Yashodamma's mind that the little devils she had all along been fearing had at last arrived.

Sundaramma grew hungry and thirsty. "I am sinking for want of food. My tongue is blistering with thirst," she would cry, but no one dared to relieve her except Satyawati. Yashodamma was constantly on guard, and flew into a fury if she heard even the echo of a whisper of complaint. "Until the dawn of the fourth day you get nothing," was the savage answer hurled at the poor girl like a missile. And with Yashodamma's consent nothing did she get but cloves and ginger, though of that enticing fare she could have had as much as she liked. There is no suspicion of anything modern or English in cloves and ginger, whether they be regarded as medicine or as food. Cloves and ginger accompanied Yashodamma's children into the world, and, she believed, her great-grandmother's children also. Consequently Sundaramma might munch them all day and all night if she chose.

At last Sundaramma's eyes became affected by the foul acrid atmosphere and began to give her much pain. She grew more and more distressingly feeble. Yet lest they should prolong her fast, she dared make no sign of what she was suffering to any one except Satyawati. But she could have confided in no one more courageous or sympathetic. When Yashodamma went for her meals Satyawati would creep in silently and open the door at the back to let in a little fresh air, and she would bring with her under her cloth a little vessel of water to moisten Sundaramma's parched lips. For an eternity,

it seemed to Sundaramma, that was all the relief she obtained, and then the day dawned when custom permitted food. But by that time she had ceased to desire anything, and what she ate had to be forced upon her. Yashodamma at first thought she was sulking, and it only dawned upon her very slowly that so far as Sundaramma's feelings were concerned, it really was a matter of indifference whether she ate or starved, whether she lived or died. Then, of course, Yashodamma fell into a panic, and sent for a man whom in courtesy we will call a doctor, who, when he arrived, naturally, if only on ceremonial grounds, objected to enter his patient's apartment and examined Sundaramma's pulse by proxy. The result was a compound made out of a few herbs, the smell of which the passers-by in the street might have resented. Satyawati expected the patient to die on the spot, but, as she did not, it is just possible that sheer disgust rallied her sinking forces and saved her. Sundaramma herself attributed her recovery to Satyawati's intelligence and care, and for that reason when the pretty little baby died a few days later refused to confirm a suspicion, openly proclaimed by Yashodamma, that a door left ajar by some one had admitted a malicious spirit by whom the baby was strangled. Every effort had been made to save the child. Yashodamma consulted an old woman in the outcaste settlement, to all appearance a twin sister to Nagamma, who solemnly assured her that if she would only make a vow when the proper time arrived to have the child's hair cut on a certain hill sacred to a certain god the child would recover. And Yashodamma had not only made the vow, but, what was a much greater test of sincerity, had set aside a rupee on the spot to meet the expenses which the journey would entail upon her. And yet the child died!

CHAPTER V

"A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF . . ."

FOR a few weeks after the baby's death it seemed to the neighbours as though the angel of death had not only silenced a baby, but, a much more remarkable feat, had also quieted its mother and its grandmother.

Yashodamma and Sundaramma went about their household duties with an air so subdued that comment was excited not only in Mungondagrahally, but wherever else the name and fame of Yashodamma were known. But alas! the cessation of hostilities was only temporary, like the lull in a storm.

One day a feast was to take place in a relative's house. The occasion need not be described. It would require too many pages. It is sufficient to say that Yashodamma's household had been invited, and, with a view to the cooking, in which their assistance might be expected, invited to come early. Soon after sunrise Yashodamma, who had had very little to do but get herself ready, planted herself in the doorway and shouted for Sundaramma. Now it is no use disguising the fact that Yashodamma had risen that morning with a determination to make herself as unpleasant as she could. Consequently, her voice, never very sweet, sounded so harsh and rasping as it broke into the early morning quiet, that her daughter-in-law, who was combing her long hair, felt her teeth set on edge by it. Sundaramma,

by the way, had not only had her little Ramanujamma to get ready, but a good many other household duties to perform such as generally fall to the lot of the daughter-in-law rather than to the mother-in-law. Yashodamma's manner, therefore, irritated her, and she rapped out: "What do you think I am doing? Playing? What is the use of your standing in the street shouting like that when you know you have my best cloth locked up in your box. How can I come as I am?"

SCHOOL OUT OF DOORS.

"I'm not coming in again," replied Yashodamma. "Your looks won't suffer, even if you do come as you are. The cloth you have on is good enough for any one. Come along, quickly, quickly, quickly."

"No, you wouldn't be happy if you saw me well dressed. But I'm not coming in this thing, it is covered with mud."

"I don't like to see you well dressed!" shouted Yashodamma, now supplied with what she had been seeking—a provocation. "May your mouth be filled with sores. Who has found you in clothes all this time? The one in the box, who gave you that? Your father? Surely we were mad when we let an outcaste like you into the house.

Put a dog into a palanquin, and it won't be long before he tears the inside out."

Sundaramma replied, beside herself with fury: "May the mouth that abuses me, not mine, be filled with sores. I a Pariah? And I suppose you are an aristocrat!"

At this juncture Satyawati came forward to make peace. "Sundaramma," she pleaded, "don't go on like this, please don't. The mother is, after all, the mother, and she is not always like this. Listen to me. Let her talk, it doesn't do you any harm. As for your cloth, I will lend you mine. I can get it in a moment, and it is one from the North. There isn't another like it in these parts."

"I am not going to sit still and listen to abuse like this. Never. You can do what you like yourself, but I won't stand it," replied Sundaramma.

"Nonsense," said Satyawati. "Let her alone. Just think she has been abusing me. Now come away."

But here Yashodamma exploded again. She was just beginning to enjoy herself, and feared the effect of Satyawati's intervention. She would have preferred a grosser insult, but Sundaramma's reference implying doubt of her noble birth was better than nothing. The curses may be omitted. It will be enough to say that she concluded by picturing Sundaramma lying prostrate on the floor in her death agony, and then: "You dare to abuse *me*, you dare to call *me* a Pariah! Wait till your husband comes home. This very day I will show you what I still have power to do."

"Let him come," replied Sundaramma. "Let him kill me. It is all he can do; and what then? Why, I shall be released from my place in a household like this. Who could ask for anything better?"

Hereupon Satyawati again intervened. "Sundaramma! See, I put my hands together and implore you to be quiet and listen to me. Come with me," and she half-dragged, half-led Sundaramma into an inner room, where, as often as she succeeded in inducing her to sit down, Yashodamma hurling another taunt at her, Sundaramma would leap to her feet to reply.

THREE LITTLE MAIDS IN SCHOOL.

Presently even Yashodamma grew weary, and from sheer exhaustion was reduced to a soliloquy. But hoarse though she was, her malevolence still sought expression. "A bad end awaits our Satyawati. None but the wilfully blind can doubt that. What does she mean by interfering like this and dragging the other creature away inside? She is the peacemaker, and I am the firebrand of the family, I suppose. She has no manners. She has no respect for God or man. Reading! reading! reading! always reading from morning till night. It has ruined her, and now she is teaching Site and demoralizing

her. I have warned her not to read, I don't know how often, but might just as well play a harp before a buffalo as appeal to a girl like her. My second son has indeed been fortunate in his marriage—but I had my doubts at the time, only of course no one pays any attention to me. May all their books be reduced to cinders! If it had not been for this accursed English learning, he would never have fallen into the trap her people laid for him. Because her father has a little money she thinks there is no one her equal. If any one differs from her about anything, she flies at once into a tearing rage. Yet no one except me sees through her, and if I say anything to her, 'There's Yashodamma's voice again,' they say. I daren't speak above a whisper. May a scorpion fall between their teeth. Every one abuses me. I excite her, they say."

This last sentence referred to Sundaramma. Yashodamma's thoughts had been switched back somehow into Sundaramma's track, and in a moment the poor undisciplined soul again lost all self-control and, to use the neighbours' expression, her mouth was beginning to ache with the torrent of abuse which for some few minutes fell unrestrainedly from it, when her daughter Savitri, who had been to the well for water, returned, and Yashodamma promptly called upon her for sympathy and support. "Listen to this, Savitri, I am a Pariah, it seems."

"What do you mean?" inquired the astonished Savitri. "Who called you a Pariah?"

"An outsider, you would think, but no, it was these two shameless creatures here. They have wormed their way into the family only to disgrace it," replied Yashodamma, the glint of infinite malevolence in her eyes as she pointed towards her daughters-in-law.

This answer to her question left Savitri no alternative but to

GIRLS PREPARING MEALS.

ally herself with her mother, with the result that for five minutes the uproar was indescribable. At length it subsided. Yashodamma and Sundaramma sat gazing into space with averted faces, and in the silence that ensued it seemed to the neighbours as though a heavy thunderstorm had just passed over them. Then a man selling fruit came up the street calling his wares, and little Ramanujamma came running in for a small coin. The grandmother being nearest to her, it was her cloth she pulled to attract attention to her demand. "The plague carry you off. Can't you see your mother. Everybody who wants anything robs me," Yashodamma rapped out, repulsing the child. Then Ramanujamma turned to her mother, who first abused the child and then struck it. The child began to shriek at the top of its

voice, and the street resounded with the cries of another member of this very emotional family. As an Indian philosopher has observed, whenever a woman of this country is offended with some one only too ready and too willing to join battle with her, she is much too fond of attacking others, especially little children, who are less capable of retaliating.

At this point a renewal of hostilities between Yashodamma and Sundaramma seemed almost certain, and undoubtedly would have occurred had it not been for the presence of mind of Satyawati, who rose, and unlocking her box, took out a few coins, and lifting the little girl in her arms, went over to the fruit-seller and bought a few plantains, an action which this time started Yashodamma off afresh, but with Satyawati, not Sundaramma, as the object. "These women born in palaces," muttered the old woman, with a fiery glance at the offender, "are all alike, they have nothing else to do but encourage children in all sorts of monkey tricks." But she got no further, for a servant from the house of feasting arrived with an appeal for immediate help. "I'm not coming," said Sundaramma with a snap. "If you don't go I shan't either," replied Yashodamma with equal obstinacy, and the two women, adjusting their garments, seemed to defy an earthquake to dislodge them. Again Satyawati came to the rescue. Approaching Yashodamma and Sundaramma in turn, and ignoring every repulse, she coaxed them and pleaded with them and exhausted every device her sad heart could suggest, until, just as she began to despair and relax her efforts from sheer exhaustion, the two women slowly rose and signified by some movement of the hips that they were prepared to follow her. They would have been very disappointed if they had missed the feast. Their show of resistance was but a kind of sacrifice

to their lost self-respect which it gave them a good deal of comfort to make, even if no one was deceived by it.

Satyawati flew to assist Sundaramma into the coveted cloth from "the North," and then, seating little Ramanujamma upon her hip, she piloted her party up to the house of the feast as quickly as their perversity and damaged dignity would allow them to move. Savitri

TYPICAL OUT-CASTE VILLAGE.

remained behind to take care of the house, and while her relatives are slowly wending their way along the street, the opportunity may as well be seized to relate her short but disastrous history.

She was about twenty-four years of age. When her eldest brother Venkatesha was married more money was needed in connexion with the ceremony than the family possessed. They obtained it by selling her, or giving her in marriage (whichever phrase is considered the more

suitable) to an old man in his seventieth year who desired to marry again. Two years later the bridegroom died, and then it was discovered that the money his wife had cost him had been borrowed. His creditors seized his land, which had been pledged as security for repayment, and Savitri was left penniless. Shortly after, a younger brother of hers named Subramaniah took the young widow to some sacred place where, as is customary, her head was shorn of its beautiful glossy hair, and then her family applied to the deceased husband's relatives for the widow's maintenance. This application falling on deaf ears, her family brought a lawsuit before the district authorities, to obtain by force what they could not get by persuasion. The defence made was scandalous, but not uncommon. First, the husband's relatives denied having any money to give; secondly, that if they had, the widow did not stand in any need of it; and, thirdly, that Savitri was a disgrace to her sex, and did not deserve any assistance. In reply, Savitri's family proved that there was a house belonging to the deceased husband which might be sold, and obtained a decree settling upon Savitri a fairly satisfactory allowance, about which all that need be said is that it was never once paid.

As for the charge against Savitri's character, that was sheer malignity and was disproved in a few minutes. She was quite uneducated, and, like her mother, altogether undisciplined, but she had never disgraced the family name, and lived up to the light that glimmered dimly in her poor suffering heart. She abstained from anything more than the regulation one meal a day, and sedulously performed every rite and ceremony with which she was acquainted. She did the rough work of the household, which always falls to the lot of a widow, without a murmur, and faced the long dreary years stretching out

before her with resignation, if not with cheerfulness, and stayed at home to take care of the house whenever the rest of the family went out to some festivity.

Yashodamma and her two daughters-in-law reached the house of their hostess to find her waiting in the doorway. She was dressed for the kitchen and was evidently very anxious about something. "What shall I do?" she asked Yashodamma (who, as has been mentioned before, was a relative), as she led her aside into the kitchen. "All this to be cooked and I am single-handed. Lakshmamma was to have come early to help me, but she has failed me. See," she said, and pointed to heaps of provisions still uncooked. But Yashodamma had not come out to a feast with any intention of assisting in its preparation. "I am sorry," she said, "but you know how it is with us. Sundaramma is fit for nothing; has done nothing but cry ever since her baby died. Satyawati—well" (here the old lady left it to be understood that adequate speech failed her) "she is absolutely useless, never does a stroke of work, acts like a queen, and expects to be waited on hand and foot. She would like us to make obeisance to her every time we pass. As for cooking, we never dream of asking her to do any such thing. For myself, I am an old woman, and my eyesight is going. I should only scald myself or put the fire out."

At this point Satyawati appeared in the doorway. One glance was sufficient. The situation was obvious. Without a word she fetched a cooking cloth, and in a moment was immersed in the mysteries of the fireplace. The whole of the day, indeed, she was busy. When the food was prepared it had to be served out to the guests, and wherever work was waiting to be done Satyawati was there to do it. She was miserably tired as she walked home in the evening, but her praises

were in the mouths of all the guests except Yashodamma, whom nothing that Satyawati could do ever satisfied.

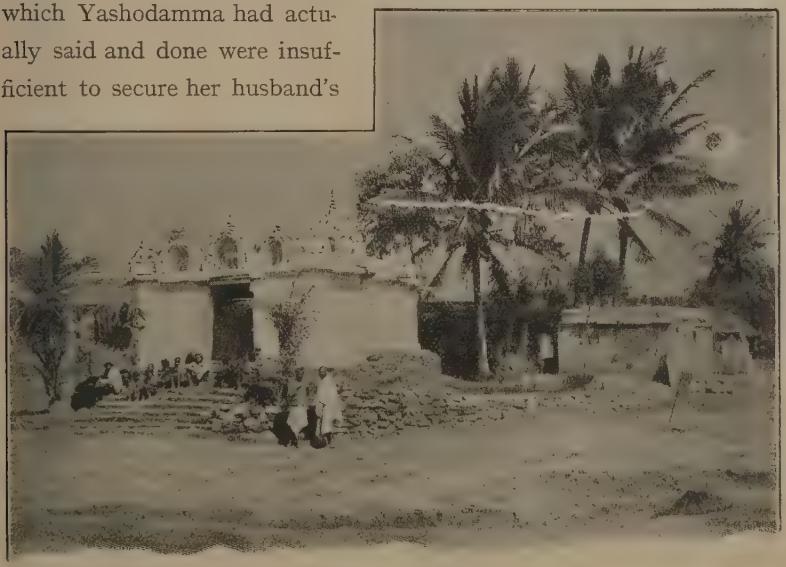
That night Sundaramma told her husband what had happened in the morning, and between her sobs declared her intention to put an end to a wretched existence by throwing herself down a well. Of course Venkatesha accepted his wife's version of what had occurred, and comforted her a little by promising to take her away as soon as he could to a home of her own.

A day or two afterwards Yashodamma again fell foul of Sundaramma, this time in the presence of Venkatesha. Much to her surprise, instead of contemptuously ignoring their quarrel, as he had always done before, this time he stepped in between the two, and, facing his mother, addressed her in terms she never forgave and never forgot. As soon as she recovered from her indignation, Yashodamma left the house and took refuge with a neighbour where she remained the whole day without food. It was not till long after dark that Satyawati and Savitri succeeded, by the exertion of some amount of physical force, in inducing her to return. Even then all the food she took was but a mouthful or two ; and then asserting that it choked her, she went off to her bed.

For some weeks afterwards Yashodamma and Sundaramma refused to speak to each other. Then, little by little, the old cat-and-dog life gradually recommenced, and one day culminated in a scene which transcended every other that had gone before. This time even blows passed between them, and Yashodamma, appealing to hidden powers too terrible to mention by name, prayed that they would come and carry off Sundaramma's husband and child and leave her, shorn of her hair, a widow. " Let those come who should never come," she

cried. To this Sundaramma replied, literally foaming at the mouth, "And your own husband and children—shall they alone live?"

When the men folk came home that evening the place resembled, they said, a graveyard with devils and demons roaming about it snarling and spitting at each other. Now that her husband had definitely deserted his mother and sided with herself, Sundaramma had ceased from even pretending to exercise any of that self-restraint which, while her husband's attitude remained uncertain, she never entirely neglected. Now she flung away not only the last remnants of caution but even ordinary decency, and every evening after a day of riot, fairly split her husband's ears with her vociferous complaints against his mother. As if the things which Yashodamma had actually said and done were insufficient to secure her husband's



A VILLAGE TEMPLE.

partisanship, she had recourse to exaggeration and even falsehood, and Venkatesha was at length embittered against his mother by his wife's spite for the rest of his life.

Lakshmi Narayana, Yashodamma's husband, had never taken any part in these scenes. He was not merely neutral; he ignored them. It was not in his nature to quarrel himself, and he did not know how to pacify those that did. Whenever it was impossible for him to find peace at home, he would hastily throw a morsel or two of food down his throat, and then (as he would put it) his head giving advice to his legs, he would depart for the day or the night. "So long as I can get out of hearing I don't mind what the women do," he would say.

Satyawati throughout remained true to the task she had always assigned herself. Where she failed to reconcile she tried to pacify. To use the village expression, she would clasp the old woman's feet and caress the younger woman's chin, and implore them to be silent if only for a minute, and when they turned on her and reviled her for interference, she would patiently wait for the next lull in the storm to renew her efforts to part them. But Bramba himself, as the neighbours said, would have failed to do anything with such women as Yashodamma and Sundaramma, and Satyawati discovered very soon that, as the result of her efforts, the feelings of the two women towards herself became only a little less malignant than those they cherished for each other. The neighbours wondered that she did not renounce so hopeless a task. As a matter of fact, she often grew very much discouraged, and was more than once tempted to write and ask her husband to let her come and join him. But he was working day and night for his final examination, in which failure would spell disaster for them all. So, lest his mind should waver at its hourly task, she refrained from

acquainting him in her weekly letter with anything that was taking place at home. But it was not this consideration alone that upheld her at her post. The habit of praying which she had learnt from her father when she was but a very little girl helped her. It carried her over her troubles, as it has carried others whose load was far heavier than Satyawati's.

CHAPTER VI

". . . . SHALL NOT STAND"

ABOUT this time further complications arose. Yashodamma's third and fourth sons, namely Ramaswami and Subramaniah, and her youngest daughter, Site, were all three engaged to be married, and the weddings, on the score of economy, had all been arranged for one and the same day. They were only awaiting Narayana's examination and return home.

Satyawati's blood froze in her veins whenever she contemplated the prospect that lay before her. It was not so much the labour she dreaded, although she saw clearly that with Yashodamma and Sundaramma in their present mood most of it would fall to her share. There was little likelihood of their doing anything but criticize. What she really feared was the possibility of some scandalous explosion between those amiable relatives of hers before the guests departed. She knew that if anything happened to excite them, no consideration for her or any one else would restrain them from flying at each other wherever they happened to be, and whoever happened to be present.

As the days passed by, and Satyawati saw no sign of reconciliation, saw, indeed, only further and more bitter estrangement, she grew so nervous and agitated that only the arrival of Narayana saved her from a serious breakdown.

Narayana returned to make a discovery that shocked him, familiar

though he was with the dissension and strife in which the difficult temperament of his mother had involved the household often enough before.

His mother and Sundaramma were not on speaking terms, but

NATIVE HUTS.

that did not disturb him. He only wished that he could feel some assurance that their silence in one another's presence would last, at least until the weddings were over. What shocked him was to find them watching each other with eyes in which hatred seemed to slumber.

He made every effort he could to re-unite the family, of course, but

he soon saw that he irritated rather than reconciled. And he soon discovered the reason for his failure. Venkatesha and Sundaramma had made up their minds to sever themselves from the rest of the family, and were glad of the excuse afforded them by the condition it was in. They felt they could not very well set up a separate establishment unless they could first conciliate public opinion. In India, breaking up a house is regarded with almost the same disfavour as breaking into one. Consequently Venkatesha, who was utterly weary of the life the two women had led him for so long, took every opportunity of displaying the width of the cleavage between them, and made no effort to bring them together. But it suited him to delay his departure till after the weddings, and therefore he co-operated with Narayana so far as to do all he could to keep his wife in order as long as there were any guests in the house. He was so successful that when the wedding party assembled there were but few who guessed how precarious was the peace that had been patched up for the occasion.

Satyawati never respected Venkatesha so much as when she saw the effect his remonstrances had produced upon his wife. The relief she felt was beyond expression, and she immersed herself in her responsibilities with a lighter heart than she had possessed for many a long day. And she deserved this relief, for the demands made upon her physical strength every day the ceremonies and festivities lasted were quite exhausting enough. Savitri helped her a little, but Yashodamma and Sundaramma stood aloof from all household affairs as though they were uninterested spectators. Satyawati rather rejoiced than otherwise at this attitude of theirs. It reduced the risk of an explosion. If they had attempted to help in any way they would

certainly have come into contact, and therefore into conflict, with one another.

On the very first day of the festivities there was a little unpleasantness, but it was not very serious, and neither Yashodamma nor Sundaramma were in any way responsible for it, but it made Satyawati a little nervous lest it should excite her two relatives. One of the guests was at fault. He had not been shown the special respect which he considered his due, and displayed his resentment in a way that threatened to spoil the day for every one else. If it had not been for Narayana's good sense, serious complications might have arisen. But he persuaded the other guests to sit down to the evening meal without the offended one, and the incident closed. That is, it closed so far as the rest of the party were concerned. The foolish guest was kept awake all night by hunger, and having nothing else to swallow he swallowed his pride, and was one of the first to present themselves at the midday meal next day.

BOYS DRILLING.

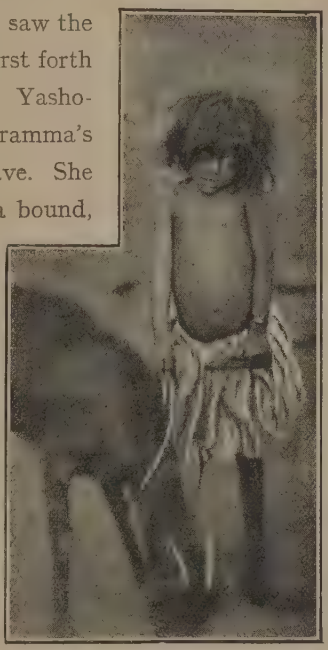
Nothing else very serious occurred till the last day. Venkatesha

kept guard over his wife as though she were a mental patient and he her keeper. He did not gag her exactly, and therefore he was unable to control her feelings altogether. She had to be allowed a little freedom, but she apparently found it sufficient to criticize Satyawati's preparations and management. Towards certain of the guests Sundaramma might perhaps have displayed a little more cordiality, but on the whole she exercised more self-restraint than she had ever done before.

Satyawati was ubiquitous, and seemed to possess a thousand eyes. The matrons of the party, always the more difficult to please on such occasions, were so gratified by her attentions that they went out of their way to pay her a unique compliment which, translated, runs something like this: That when work was to be done you would have thought Satyawati was a servant, and when rest could be indulged in you would have thought she was a queen. They also deduced the following moral from her conduct for the benefit of their daughters, to this effect: That if any one wanted to set themselves up for an example to others they had better do it Satyawati's way, whose actions spoke so much louder than her words. (Their exact words were: That one deed of the hand is better than a hundred words of the mouth. It is not only more useful, but more likely to turn others into the right road—with which sentiment most of us must agree.)

In due time the ceremonies terminated and the festivities drew to a close. In a few hours all the guests were to depart, and then, thought Satyawati and her husband, if the storm must burst, let it. They began to breathe freely, when suddenly, without any warning, the inevitable happened. Poor little Suramma, one of the brides, was the cause. She was wandering listlessly around, when her eye fell

upon Ramanujamma, Sundaramma's daughter, munching a plantain, and from pure mischief she snatched it away, and had bitten half of it off before she could be stopped. Sundaramma, unfortunately, was sitting close by and saw the outrage, and her long pent-up feelings burst forth in torrents of abuse upon Suramma. Yashodamma was nowhere near, but Sundaramma's voice would have reached her in the grave. She burst upon the scene with a rush and a bound, and Suramma being somewhat of a favourite with the old woman, the long-looked-for opportunity became hers. As the guests remarked on their way home, the wonder was that the roof did not fly off. Both Yashodamma and Sundaramma were notorious for fluency of speech, but this time they surpassed themselves, and when they had exhausted the vocabulary which frequent use had made familiar to them they proceeded to coin terms.



KIDS.

Lakshmi Narayana bore himself as usual at the outset. He shut his eyes and waited for the frenzied women to tire themselves out; but when the scene continued and neither of the women displayed any of the ordinary signs of fatigue even he was scandalized. At last he rose and, confronting his wife, sternly bade her be silent. That accelerated the climax. Livid with rage, for a moment Yashodamma lost her voice, and then with the snarl of a wolf, "Is that tongue of

yours diseased that it can find nothing to say to that creature there?" she cried, pointing to Sundaramma. "Why should I be the only one you abuse, I, who have been so long-suffering?"

It was hopeless now trying to stem the rush of her wild, mad speech by any mere expostulation. Her eyes were blazing with sheer animal fury. She was, as the guests expressed it, out of the body with rage, and Lakshmi Narayana did what the meek soul had never dreamed of doing before. He seized a stick which was lying on the ground, and, before he realized what he was doing, he had struck her, and that before the whole of their little world. Then Venkatesha appeared, and hurrying forward, infected by the anger of his father, raised his hand and struck Sundaramma.

Yashodamma reeled away to a corner and burst into bitter tears. Sundaramma, always the more dramatic, proceeded to beat her breast and loosen her hair, and then, flinging herself down on the ground, fairly split the heavens open with her passionate cries.

Overwhelmed with shame and grief, Narayana and Satyawati gazed helplessly on, and the guests wandered one by one away out of sight, only returning to say farewell, and disperse to their several homes.

CHAPTER VII

RAJAH AND REFORMER

OUR history now reverts to the affairs of the Rajah. His position when we parted from him was about as critical as it could well be. He was a disgraced and apparently ruined man. Every device for raising money had been exhausted, and it would have been hardly more difficult to extract blood from a stone than to borrow any more rupees from the money-lenders.

The Rajah spent his days of enforced idleness in one of his gardens on the outskirts of the town, sometimes sitting under a tree discussing his prospects with his friends, or, more accurately, with such of his friends as, having no money to lend, were not afraid to meet him; sometimes reclining for hours by himself on the parapet of the wall around one of his wells, moodily watching his bullocks working the machinery that raised the water for irrigating the place, finding some relief, it is to be supposed, in listening to the pleasant sound of the water as it rushed splashing down the channel.

But it was not in the Rajah's nature to remain inactive long, and he soon wearied of his own reflections. So he bestirred himself, and began to take some interest in the labours of the auditors who were investigating the condition of his finances. As was usual with him, whenever he entered upon any new pursuit, he very soon grew eager

and excited. He made suggestions and proposed arrangements so sensible that, for the first time for many weary months, the authorities became a little cheerful about him.

One afternoon he mounted his pony, and rode away along one of the high roads which connected his State with the British territory around. He cantered out far enough to get clear of the town and its traffic, and then obeying a sudden impulse, pulled up his pony and, tying it to a tree, sat down upon the wall of a wayside temple. Half an hour afterwards he was just thinking of returning, when a traveller, also riding a pony, drew near, evidently bound for the Rajah's capital. Curiosity moved them both to look at one another, and the Rajah recognized an old friend—Narayanamurti of Mungondagrahally. Years ago, when Narayana was a little boy, he had attended the State school in the capital of the State, residing with some distant relative of his father. He did not stay there long. The standard of the school was not high enough to further the hopes of a boy so ambitious and so intelligent. He ran away to the famous school before referred to, as soon as he suspected that he had exhausted the teaching capacity of the State school, but he stayed in the capital long enough to make the acquaintance of the Rajah, then a boy, and that acquaintance subsequently ripened into a sincere friendship. Friendship is perhaps hardly the most suitable word to express the attachment between them, considering the difference in their characters. But although, while Narayana was toiling so terribly at his books, the Rajah was sowing so plentiful a crop of wild oats, the affection between them remained quite unimpaired. Only it was now more obvious than ever that Narayana was born to give his friend advice, and the Rajah to need it.

BOYS DRILLING AT BANGALORE BOYS' HOME.

After the usual greetings had passed between them, and the Rajah had congratulated his friend upon his latest successes, the Rajah said a little shamefacedly: "So you've heard of the trouble I've got into."

"Yes," replied Narayana, "that is what I have come over about. It seems to me, Rajah, that you don't quite realize where you're drifting. Have you had no one to advise you since I saw you last?"

The Rajah laughed meaningly. "Advisers? Oh, any number; but you know what they say, advice is like a biscuit, it doesn't carry one very far. If I didn't listen to you, was I likely to listen to any one else? The stone that remains hard in the river—will the dew or the rain soften it? No, I have been a fool. There is no doubt about it. Some men tumble into the pit by broad daylight which they have avoided often enough by night."

"Let us sit down, Rajah. This is just the place for a chat," said Narayana. "There isn't a soul within half a mile of us."

The Rajah and Narayana seated themselves on the broad parapet of the temple wall, and Narayana continued to the accompaniment of

the cawing of the crows flying home to the village, and the shrieking of the green parrots darting in and out among the boughs of the roadside trees:

"I know more of the British and their ways than you do. I read their newspapers. I happen to know, everybody knows who is not buried alive up country in a jungle like this, that there are powerful ministers (men on the Council, whose utterances find their way to the ear of the Secretary of State) who have never ceased regretting that States like yours should ever have been handed over to native administration. You can see for yourself the contrast between the barren sandy waste of country outside your State and the rich well-watered soil within. Think of the temptation it must be to the British to resume possession now that they have this story to tell about you. Suppose they did; suppose they deposed you on the ground, of course, of maladministration, neither you nor your friends could make any protest. 'His finances hopelessly chaotic, his people alienated, would be the charge against you they could bring. And if they did, who could dispute its accuracy? You can't borrow a rupee anywhere, and your people are fretting their hearts out against your exactions. I fancy that if only a man could be found courageous enough to draw up a petition praying for direct British rule, hundreds would sign it. But you wince, Rajah; am I speaking too freely?"

"No, no," replied the Rajah, "only," and he laughed ruefully, "remember the proverb—'don't pull till it tears, don't bend till it breaks.' It seems to me that with enemies on the Council and enemies on my own hearth, I am sitting between the pestle and the mortar."

"That is your position exactly," said Narayana eagerly. "You

have saved me much embarrassment, Rajah, by admitting it. Now I may offer the advice I came with. You won't summarily reject it, I can see. You will consider it first, anyhow."

But in order that the reader should appreciate Narayana's proposal a few words of explanation are necessary.

PATIENT IN A MISSION HOSPITAL.

Nine out of every ten people in the Rajah's State depended upon farming for their daily bread, and yet up to this time no one had ever held his lands upon a more permanent basis than a yearly tenancy. What that meant may be guessed by any one acquainted with the methods of government in vogue in the East. After a good harvest the tenant would be required to pay so much extra rent that it made very little difference to him in the end whether the season was favourable or not. The same result would accrue if the tenant tried to

improve his holding by expending money or extra labour upon it, and at last, as a natural consequence, the spirit of enterprise practically vanished from the State.

If the Rajah's life had been a normal one his exactions would not have been so cruel. But he had been extravagant, and money had to be raised somehow. The money-lenders were relied upon so long as he had any security to offer. When the money-lenders failed him the Rajah's only unexhausted resource left was his rents, and those he raised until the relationship between Rajah and tenant resembled, the people said, that of cat and mouse.

Narayana's advice may now be appreciated. He proposed that every tenant's land should be secured to him and his heirs for just so long as they continued to pay their rent. Secondly, that a classification of soils should be made by competent surveyors, so as to determine, in view of the difference in value of the different farms, what a fair rent was. Thirdly, that when a man's rent had been estimated in accordance with this classification, that rent should be regarded as fixed, never to be altered except with the consent of the Government of India.

"Propose to introduce this scheme into your State," said Narayana. "It will delight those on the Council who believe in the Native States, and will disconcert those who do not. It will also rejoice the hearts of your people, who will rally round you instead of deserting you, should your deposition ever be hinted at. And I believe in the end your revenue will profit. Farms that have gone out of cultivation will be reoccupied, and a stimulus will be given to enterprise which will eventually cover your name with glory." But here Narayana suddenly paused. It occurred to him that the Rajah was not so

responsive as he might have been. "You don't seem pleased, Rajah," exclaimed Narayana; "don't you approve of the scheme?"

"They ask a question like that of the widow whose head is about to be shorn of her hair, don't they?" replied the Rajah. "'Why do you weep, Gangamma? The scissors are inlaid with gold and ivory, aren't they?' What I want to know is what good your scheme will do me now, at this present moment. I am up to my ears in debt. I could not raise another rupee if I were to knock at the door of every money-lender in the Province. My glory that is to be, I confess does not thrill me as some device for raising money to-day would. Paint the house scarlet and gold; hang garlands round every neck. It will be the food that the hungry guests look at. Is not that so, Narayana?"

TWELVE FINGERS AND TOES.

"You are impetuous, Rajah," replied Narayana, with a smile. "I have not finished. You will see that it is to-day I am thinking about quite as much as to-morrow. What is it that is embarrassing you? Not so much the actual money you have

borrowed as the outrageous interest they are charging you. What you need is a loan on easier terms, so that you can pay off those money-lending vultures at once. But the terms of the new loan must be so easy, so reasonable, that repayment with interest shall be a possibility which a few years' care and economy shall enable you to realize. Now there is only one quarter where a loan like that may be looked for without exposing ourselves to ridicule. In the Government lies your only hope. But in their present mood they are not likely to do anything for you. You have alienated them. You must now propitiate them, and I believe that if you propose to them the introduction of this scheme that I have just sketched you will so gratify Government that they will be prepared to grant you the loan you require."

"If you really think that a loan would be the result, so far as I am concerned, Narayana, you may regard the scheme as introduced. I am a disgraced and ruined man. Every group of people I see, I know is discussing me. Every post that comes in may bring me a typewritten letter that will keep me awake half the night. But I wish I could feel as confident as you about the prospect of my getting a loan. If they accept the scheme, and refuse the loan, I shall be in a worse plight than ever. Under the present system, I am a Rajah, not only in name, but in power. The land is my own. My tenant must pay my price or quit. Under your scheme I shall be subject to all sorts of conditions and limitations. Should one of my oxen stray over his field, what is to hinder an insolent tenant from sending it to the pound? Paying his fixed rent from year to year, he will be independent of my favour for ever."

"You will have to govern as the British themselves govern, it is

true, Rajah, but better self-limitation than extinction. I warn you that the days of your dynasty are numbered, you will pass out of your palace a nameless man unless you can associate your name with a great reform."

VILLAGE PREACHING.

"I believe you are right, Narayana," replied the Rajah, "but it is getting late. Let us go home and discuss the matter further."

The two men then mounted their ponies and rode thoughtfully away, passing on the road herds of cattle coming in from the pasture land in the jungle that trampled the dust into clouds, through which the setting sun appeared like a ball of bronze hanging in the western sky. On the outskirts of the town, near a well, they came upon a small

group of people conversing with an Englishman, evidently a Missionary.

"A Padri?" asked Narayana, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes," said the Rajah, "I know him fairly well. He generally calls upon me when he comes here. To tell the truth, he and I get on fairly well together. If I had listened to him I shouldn't have come to this pass."

Narayana made no reply for a moment. The Rajah's words seemed to set him thinking. Then he leaned towards the Rajah and said in an undertone: "That Padri is the very man we want. Let us send for him."

The Rajah, very much surprised, asked what a Padri could do for him.

"My idea is," replied Narayana, "to ask the Padri to come and see you. Tell him the difficulty you are in, immersed in debt, and in danger of deposition, and I will tell him about the scheme. That will please him. The scheme is so very English. And then I will speak about your need of money, and ask him if he can see his way to sound the Commissioner and find out whether Government will accept the scheme as an act of atonement on your part, and, if so, whether as an act of grace on theirs, they will grant you a loan. Of course Government may have made up its mind to proceed to extremities, in which case—but we need not meet trouble half-way. What we need is a mediator, unofficial and really friendly. The Padri is the best man we could have. This Commissioner goes to church and keeps a Bible in his despatch box, they say, and will pay more consideration to a Padri than to any one else we could send. Anyhow, if the Padri consents to act for us, Hanuman was not more faithful a friend to Rama than the Padri will be to you."

CHAPTER VIII

THE PADRI

BY this time the Rajah and Narayana found themselves at the entrance to the Palace. The house of the Rajah was generally called a palace whenever English was being spoken, but a more modest description would have better fitted the curious collection of buildings in which the Rajah lived. The most obvious criticism that suggested itself to a European was its deplorable need of paint, whitewash and repairs generally ; but neither the Rajah nor Narayana noticed any of these defects, as they entered the dimly-lighted hall.

An hour or two later the tired Padri, sitting in his tent in the middle of a field, noticed a light being borne towards him, and presently heard a voice inquiring for him. It appeared that the Rajah was inclined for conversation, and begged the Padri to step over and see him. A few minutes later the Padri was climbing the stairs that led to the roof of the palace. He found Narayana seated with the Rajah. For a good half-hour, time was wasted in all sorts of irrelevancies before the Padri discovered the subject that it was proposed to discuss, and then another half-hour passed away before he learned that anything more than advice was required of him. But having reached that point, all formality vanished.

" Rajah," said the Padri, " I am not a Government man. I am a

Padri, a Padri and nothing more. Rajah and ryot in time of trouble are glad to send for me, but when I stand up in the street and speak about God and the soul you all shun me. The cry is raised, 'Beware of the Padri,' as though I had come with some sinister motive in my heart. Why not appeal for help to one of your own Padris, one of those to whom you pay such huge tribute?"

Narayana looked up gravely. "We appeal to you, not because you are a Christian, but because you are absolutely trustworthy, and we know that if you take up our cause the Viceroy himself will not frighten or cajole you. Now I will be perfectly frank with you and admit what you, as a man of the world, have already guessed. I am not only the Rajah's friend. I am his lawyer; he is my client. I have to make a living somehow, and the Rajah, if he obtains the loan, will pay me a small fee out of it for the advice I am giving him. But surely you will not be prejudiced against the Rajah or me on that account. You say yourself that the labourer is worthy of his hire, do you not? The scheme I have outlined before you will revolutionize the fortunes of the people. It will plant twenty trees where now there is but one, and bring many acres of land under the plough that have lain waste since the creation of the world. If the present Rajah does not introduce the scheme it will never be introduced. Depose him, and you will search in vain for a successor (I know the family well) who will consent to reign without the privilege of fixing his own land rents and occasionally revising them. I have one eye upon the Rajah's interests, I admit (he is my friend as well as my client), but I have the other upon the interests of his subjects."

Thus the men talked on until well into the small hours, when the Padri took leave and returned to his tent. But the next evening saw

SCULPTURE AT THE TEMPLE OF MADURA.

them closeted together again. The Padri had decided to give the assistance that Narayana required.

"I will speak to the Commissioner for you. I don't know whether I shall do any good or not. I run a certain amount of risk. I expose myself to censure for interference. But I daresay I shall survive a rebuff. If the Commissioner regards your scheme with any enthusiasm I daresay he will himself ask what it is you expect in return. In that case the grant of a loan to set the Rajah on his feet again will be a most natural suggestion to make. Yes, I quite understand the task you have committed to me. I also believe in the Native State—with the Viceroy not too far off—and should be sorry indeed to see this particular one extinguished. But it is getting late. Give me permission to retire, Rajah! Salaam! Salaam!"

CHAPTER IX

A COMMISSIONER'S CAMP

A FEW days later the Padri, having learned what route the Commissioner was taking in one of his tours of inspection, made it his business to follow and intercept him. The place where the Padri planned to meet him was a large town, on the outskirts of which there was an outcaste settlement, where a small elementary school had long since been established by the Mission. It was, therefore, a convenience for the Padri to interview the Commissioner there. He could inspect his school afterwards.

The camp of the Commissioner had been prepared in a small copse on the bank of an almost dried-up stream. During the rains the floods would often mount up to the level of the high and bare banks. At the time of the Padri's visit, there was no more water than would cover the feet of the traveller. Half-a-dozen tents or more glistened white wherever the sunshine succeeded in trickling through the branches of the trees beneath which they were pitched. A number of peons or messengers in somewhat fantastic attire were moving about among them, while three or four policemen in cool white uniform with red headgear were stationed at various strategic points to keep the people in order who had collected from all parts of the country round. The greater part of the crowd was present in

connexion with a case which the Commissioner was trying in his magisterial capacity. If they were not witnesses, they were interested friends and relatives of either the plaintiff or the defendant. Such of the witnesses as had not already been called upon to give their evidence were busily engaged in impressing more deeply upon their memories what they were going to admit and what they were

STACKING THE RICE STRAW.

going to deny. Small groups here and there seated under a tree were evidently trying to come to some agreement as to the most ingenuous answer in the event of certain not entirely unexpected questions being put to them. One group surrounding a clerkly-

looking man of legal aspect was perhaps engaged in the still more onerous and responsible task of fabrication or suppression, pure and simple. There were few witnesses there who would not be more cheerful in the evening after the ordeal of cross-examination was over, and they had irrevocably committed themselves to whatever they had decided to swear to as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Delay and suspense play havoc with the nerves of an Indian witness.

But not every one there was interested in the case. Some had come in the hope that a few rupees judiciously distributed among various subordinate officials would influence in their favour the reply they were expecting to a petition they had recently put in. They doubtless hoped that money so expended would induce the officials so bribed to conceal from the great man one or two facts which, were they known, would establish the claims of others, probably rival petitioners, upon the favour which they were asking for themselves. If the foolish people but knew it, these officials were the very last people in the world the Commissioner would consult in such matters, and the money was simply thrown away.

As the Padri pushed his way through the throng, he could hear the inquiry as to what were his business and office whispered about on all sides, and then here and there some one, who probably had belonged to his audience at some street preaching in their village, would volunteer the information that he was a Padri, whereupon, as it was well known how little authority a Padri wielded, and how low his status in the official world was, curiosity about him at once subsided. A messenger was soon found to take in the Padri's name, and he was presently shown into that particular tent where the Com-

missioner, seated under a vigorously-pulled punkah and dressed in the lightest and most unconventional attire, was immersed in work furnished him apparently by a portentously high pile of papers heaped up on a table before him. The atmosphere in the tent was like that of an oven, and it was oppressive owing to the presence of a great number of people. The face of the Commissioner was flushed with wrath, for which there was a good deal of justification. During the last hour he had been listening to an amount of perjury that would have excited indignation in a much less trying climate. And yet, so accustomed to false witness was the Commissioner, that it was not so much the perjury that irritated him as the difficulty he experienced in deciding which particular untruth he should accept as evidence. He knew that whatever his judgment was there would be an appeal to a higher court. Money in India is spent like water when a legal battle is being waged. And he felt morally certain that which ever story he accepted the High Court would express surprise that he had not decided otherwise. The Padri recognized the inopportuneness of the moment for his business, and after apologizing for disturbing him asked the Commissioner for permission to stroll over in the evening for a chat. "Come to dinner," was the hospitable response, and the Padri departed, thankful that his lot in life was not that of an Indian Civil Servant.

A BRAHMIN PUNDIT.

CHAPTER X

PADRI AND PARIAH

FROM the camp the Padri made for the town, passed through it, and, emerging on the other side, crossed the sort of No-Man's Land which divides the caste from the outcaste settlement, and found himself in the quarters of the Pariah.

Everyone who knows anything at all about India has heard of caste. Indeed, people seem to have heard so much that they wish to hear no more. Consequently only one comment upon the subject will be here indulged in, and that is to this effect, viz., that people would not object so much to discussing the institution of caste if they were of the number that suffer from its disadvantages or pay its penalties—if they were outcastes, for instance.

The Padri found most of the men folk away from home. Those that remained were loafing about, unwashed, unkempt, as unpleasant to look upon, save with eyes veiled by Christ-like pity, as any person could well be.

The women were no more attractive than the men, and as for the children, the less said the better.

The narrow streets and the huts on either side were such as only a people could tolerate who from the cradle to the grave are too sadly familiar with dirt, disease and degradation to dream of anything better.

The settlement as a whole, therefore, was just the place for a Mission School. The Padri had no theory to offer which could explain why God could allow such misery to exist, but he knew a good sphere for Christian work when he saw it, and so long as he could attack dirt, he wasted no time over any theory whereby to account for its existence.

There were not so many boys in the school as there ought to have been. Many were away in the fields at work, but there were quite as many present as the size of the school justified, and quite as many as the solitary teacher could satisfactorily instruct. The Padri spent a busy time examining the boys. They were not by any means brilliant students. With one or two exceptions, none of them proved to be more alluring mentally than physically. Indeed a severe critic might have called some of them mentally degenerate, and, possibly, not without reason. But even the dullest boy dimly recognized the compassion of the examiner, and exerted himself to win a word or two of approval. Results were not encouraging from a severely educational standpoint, but for such as they were, the Padri was thankful. He never grudged, even in his blackest moments, any time or money expended upon his Pariah schools. It was the only possible method of reaching the class attending them with any Gospel at all. And there were men now walking the streets whose lot in life was distinctly brighter because, as boys, they had attended his schools and, while young and impressionable, had heard the story of Divine love. Consequently he left the school at its close that afternoon a far more contented man than some might suppose he had any reason to be. And on his way back to his tent he recalled how the Lord Jesus, years and years ago, had taken little children

into His arms, and blessing them, had announced to all the ages that of such was the Kingdom of Heaven. But he smiled as he also recalled the pictures he had seen on the walls of Sunday Schools in England. It hardly needed a Christ to take into His arms such clean, smiling, chubby children as those upon whom the artists had lavished so many colours. Any man with ordinary human instincts would have caressed such children as they. Surely, thought the Padri, the little ones that Christ then blessed resembled rather his outcaste boys.

HANUMANTA, THE MONKEY GOD.

So musing, and paying no more attention than he could help to the sights and smells around him, the Padri left the outcaste settlement and returned to his tent. There he found a young man waiting to see him, who smilingly salaamed and introduced himself as Ramappa, with an air that seemed to intimate that the Padri might now expect a treat.

"You don't remember me, sir, I suppose," said Ramappa. No, replied the Padri; he was sorry, but he could not say that he did.

"And yet you have seen me often enough years ago," replied Ramappa. "May I tell you my history?"

"Certainly, I shall be pleased," said the Padri, and foreseeing a lengthy interview, asked for a few minutes' respite first while he took tea. This was what he afterwards listened to—

"I saw you first, sir, in this very village about ten years ago. I was then a scholar in that very school I hear you have been examining to-day. Of course I was but a lad then, and rather short and stunted for my age."

"You?" exclaimed the Padri, gazing incredulously into the bright eyes that met his so frankly, and noting with equal astonishment the clear and distinct articulation with which the young man spoke. "You? are you then," here the Padri hesitated for a moment, "an old scholar of ours?" The Padri had nearly asked him whether he was a Pariah. There are more polite and euphonious words in use than that, but by the law of perversity, he could only think of the one word it might not have been wise for him to use. As it happened it did not matter. Ramappa laughed and confessed his origin, and allowed the Padri a moment to recover from his surprise, and not only surprise, but delight also—to understand which one had need to be, like the Padri, in daily contact with unhappy specimens of the submerged classes from which Ramappa had sprung.

"I have altered, I hope, in many ways since those days," continued Ramappa. "The schoolmaster of my time has been transferred to another school, I hear. He was very good to me. But then I think I was one of his favourite scholars. He could always depend upon me to do him credit at examination times when the

A BADAGA TEMPLE.

Padri used to come round to inspect. He gave me a book once, a Christian hymn-book, because I remembered and could repeat his Bible stories so well. I was very interested in his Bible lesson, and was never happier than when he came to class with a new story for us. If I had not left so early, I fancy I should have risen rather high in the school, and might possibly have attracted your attention. But famine and cholera broke out badly ten years ago, and my father was obliged to move away. We all went with him, of course, mother and my brothers and sisters, and I think we must have pretty well tramped over the whole Province. I soon lost my books, and then my taste for reading went. But that was not to be wondered at. We were half-starved sometimes, and we could think of nothing else but the struggle for bread. Mother died somewhere by the roadside. One of my sisters ran away, and one of my brothers got lost in a crowd at a big festival. But I never really forgot the stories, and, somehow, I never despaired about the future. It makes a lot of difference to one's courage to have made the acquaintance of Joseph, Samuel and David. But sometimes care and anxiety stifled my better thoughts.

"At last, a few months ago, we found ourselves in a village where we caught sight of a crowd of people listening to a man preaching. Drawing near, I thought I heard him pronounce a name that was familiar to me. I edged my way through the crowd without exactly knowing what I was doing, and in the space of a minute, I was carried back to the old school, and I became a little boy again listening to David's fight with Goliath. Presently the crowd seemed to have had enough, and one by one they dispersed, leaving me alone staring up into the face of the preacher, like a hungry dog waiting for another

bone. Then the speaker spoke to me: 'You have heard these things before, little brother?'

"'Yes,' I replied, 'many times; but oh! so long ago. You have blown on dying embers and have raised a flame'; and I told him what I have just told you. He was very kind to me. He was one of your Christian ministers. He found me work in the town

HINDU MERCHANTS.

and lent me all the books he had. I read them through, every one. I didn't know how to slake my thirst. Besides that, he sat up talking with me till past midnight for I don't know how many nights, and a few weeks ago I joined your religion. A European Missionary sprinkled water on my head in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. And he gave me a new name, Vedamitra, which

ANCIENT PAGODAS.

means, you know, a friend of the Veda, the only true Veda, of course, your Bible."

Ramappa ceased speaking, and waited for the Padri to cross-examine him, but the Padri's thoughts were too busy for speech just then. He was trying to guess which of the boys he had just come from examining would be likely to come forward and encourage a faint-hearted successor of his as Ramappa had just cheered him. He scanned every little face his memory could set before him; but alas! the boy who was not dull was cunning, and the boy who was not cunning was dull. The second Ramappa would evidently appear as unexpectedly as the first.

The Padri then asked his visitor about the brothers, and Ramappa's reply furnished him with material for fresh thought. It appeared that they had never been sent to school. Ramappa was the only member of the family the father or mother had allowed to attend, and why he had been singled out was a mystery, the result of which appealed to the Padri's imagination with infinite pathos. While Ramappa, surnamed Vedamitra, his bright clear eyes, his neat trim white dress and his quick agile movements all indicating robust Christian manhood, was seated in the Padri's tent, relating this history of his, somewhere in some big city two young men, both older than Ramappa, were returning from work to the filthy hovels they called home, reeling, stumbling, the worse for drink. When not shouting foul abuse at each other, their hoarse, harsh voices would be raised in some vile song. The Padri had seen so many of their kind that he found no difficulty in drawing the scene for himself down to its very last detail. He saw their bloodshot eyes, their matted hair, their poor diseased bodies, and the contrast between them and him in whom so great a miracle had been wrought by the revelation of Divine Love made him long more intensely than ever for means wherewith to multiply his schools.

CHAPTER XI

THE PADRI AND POLITICS

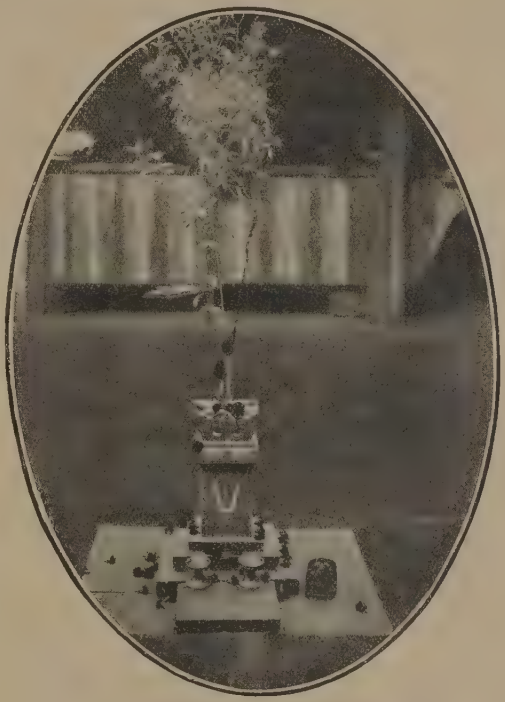
BY the time that Ramappa had taken his departure the sun had set and the moon had risen, and with it the cool evening breeze. It became time for the Padri to start off to keep his appointment with the Commissioner and plead the cause of his friend the Rajah.

He found the Commissioner, weary with his long day's work, seated outside his tent in the moonlight, filling his lungs with the clean sweet air that was now sweeping over miles and leagues of untainted jungle. The evening meal was hardly a merry one. Both men were far too tired to make conversation, and it was not until the tables had been cleared and the Commissioner had stretched himself in his long armchair that the Padri thought it wise to open out the business upon which he had come. The Commissioner was naturally loth to allow the conversation to drift into official channels, and for some time he kept the Padri at bay by discussing idyllic furloughs he had enjoyed, and sketching others still more idyllic he was contemplating in the future. But politics intervening, gave the Padri the opportunity he sought, and ultimately, without any undue compulsion, the subject was being discussed of the Rajah's personality and prospects.

The treatment accorded this topic was distinctly discouraging. The Commissioner's lethargy vanished, and, raising himself in his chair, he displayed something of that tremendous energy which

had made his name a terror to every slack official serving under him.

It appeared that he, the Commissioner, had "washed his hands" of the Rajah and intended leaving him to his fate. The Commissioner had shielded him so long that his own reputation had been imperilled. He was going to run no further risks. As soon as the investigation into the finances of the State which he had initiated was completed, he was going to write a report for the eye of the Governor and his Council which, he hoped, would condemn him for ever. And so on.



THE TULSI PLANT USED IN BRAHMIN WORSHIP.

It was with the utmost difficulty that the Padri could induce the Commissioner to listen to even the briefest sketch of Narayana's scheme; and then, when the Padri concluded with a hint concerning the loan which would be necessary if the Rajah as well as his people

were to be both considered in the reorganization under contemplation, between his indignation with the Rajah and his respect for the Padri the Commissioner was reduced to a most pitiable condition. Indeed, the Padri feared the whole evening would be spoiled. But the Commissioner, after denouncing the impertinence of the present-day native, contented himself with a request for the subject to be changed. To that request the Padri responded as follows—

"I am not so foolish as you probably think in regard to this matter. I know the Rajah and his ways pretty thoroughly, and I have probably talked to him on occasion as plainly as you have. Give me credit for being something better than a tool of his. The interest I take in him is based upon an acquaintance with him more lengthy and more intimate than yours can have been. And, moreover, I have had access to information about him which I have collected in all sorts of odd ways. Foolish as he has been, he is wisdom itself compared with the only member of his clan you could appoint as his successor, if you undertook the troublesome task of deposing him. I honestly think the prospects for his people are incalculably brighter with him as Rajah, now that he has had this lesson to digest, than they would be if you appointed the raw, untamed youth whom you have in your mind. Of course, if Government contemplates abolishing the throne altogether, and absorbing the State into purely British administration, I have nothing more to say, but with this agitation for Home Rule afloat and gaining adherents so rapidly here and at home, I don't see how that can be accomplished without raising a tremendous storm of protest.

"I am interested in this matter quite as much on behalf of the ryots as of the Rajah. Only the present Rajah can introduce the

scheme I have laid before you. No successor of his will ever agree to sit on the throne shorn of so much power. You could introduce it yourself, of course, if you altered the constitution of the State and abolished the Rajah-ship altogether, but I feel sure Government will see the unwisdom of doing that. The National Congress would protest, it would get into the newspapers, and these very ryots who are now seething with discontent against the Rajah would turn right round and inundate you with petitions in his favour.

A MOHAMMEDAN MOSQUE.

"The fact is, not only will it be the salvation of the State to introduce the Rajah's scheme, but he alone can do it, and it will save you no end of trouble to allow him to do it. You know better even than I what the system is like under which rents have been collected hitherto. I mean, in particular, you know how many long-established parasites there are in every native State who never pay more than a fraction of rent, no matter how many acres of land they cultivate. Think

of the hornets' nest that will be stirred if you make any attempt to enforce payment from them when you come to deal with the question of reorganization of finance, if you decline the Rajah's assistance. Most of them are Brahmins, remember. They can appeal to the sanctions of religion, and they can give no end of trouble. Let the Rajah deal with them. He has seen too much of the world to retain much respect for a priest as a priest. And besides, you know him, he is always the victim of his latest enthusiasm. He is now so keen to introduce his new land system and to win the approval at one stroke of both his own subjects and the British Government that he is prepared to make his own mother submit to taxation."

"Yes, I can see all that," replied the partially mollified Commissioner, "but why on earth should he ask for a loan? I simply dare not propose such a thing. They would think me mad! I should lay myself open to all sorts of insinuations. Of all the——" Here the Commissioner lost control of his temper again, and the Padri intervened to explain once more the Rajah's dilemma; the iniquitous rates of interest the money-lenders were charging him, and the impossibility of his ever being able to extricate himself from their clutches unless Government helped him. The Commissioner listened at first with ill-concealed impatience, but, presently, it became evident that he was growing interested almost in spite of himself, and when the Padri finished he remained silent, as though pursuing some reflections of his own. A few minutes elapsed, and then he spoke. "Why are you so interested in the Rajah? Surely he doesn't contemplate conversion. That would be too appalling, you know. I can find a way of dealing with a drunken or even an

imbecile Rajah, but infinite wisdom itself would be perplexed by the problem of a Christian Rajah in a Native State."

As soon as the Padri recovered from the shock, he sought to reassure the suspicious Commissioner. "I fear there is no chance of that happening. You need not be alarmed. I am not a Jesuit. The price a Rajah would have to pay for his Christianity would be nothing less than his throne. It would be his abdication I should

THE TEMPLE OF SIVA AT OHAR BANGLA, NEAR JIAGANG.

be recommending at this moment if I thought the Rajah wished to forsake the religion of his people for mine."

Soon after the interview closed. Nothing important remained to be said either about the Rajah or his State, the scheme or the

loan, and the Padri soon took his departure, resuming his journey the next day.

It may be asked why the Padri interested himself so deeply in the secular affairs of this dubious Rajah. The question is easily answered. He couldn't help it. Years of intercourse with the people of the State had produced in him a special feeling towards them. He knew every inch of the country, and there were few faces with which he was not familiar, even though he could not always remember names.

In England there is hardly any parallel to the relation which so often springs up in India between a Missionary and the people among whom he lives. He is under no delusion as to the depth or sincerity of any interest they may take in himself, but then that is a matter about which he rarely thinks. What alone he is conscious of is the feeling he himself has for the people.

How to describe that feeling is a puzzle. One can only say that it owes its origin to the circumstance that the Missionary becomes familiar with all the crises of a Hindu's life, and, being trusted as few other men are, is so often asked for advice and help that the habit of exerting himself on their behalf in any way he can grows upon him. A Missionary worthy of the name cannot see a people being decimated by plague or cholera, harassed and bewildered by some corrupt and merciless official, suffering untold and unnecessary pain by reason of sheer ignorance of the most elementary surgery, and, in spite of their need devoid of all religious consolation, save that furnished by a greedy priest, a hideous idol or a hopeless fatalism, without making some attempt to aid them.

CHAPTER XII

CONCERNING MEDICAL MISSIONS

AFTER leaving the Commissioner, the Padri's face was set toward a village, the name of which will become famous when the time comes to write the history of mission work in India. For on the outskirts of that village a mission hospital has been built, whose praise is in the mouths of thousands of people scattered about over an immense area.

Now no one in England can ever be expected to appreciate the significance of a mission hospital, otherwise more money would be subscribed, if only to help the medical and surgical work which so many societies do. For let any one recall the occasions when he or some one dear to him has suffered acutely, and then let him try to imagine what his despair would have been if medical aid had been as far removed from him as it is from millions in India to-day.

People talk as though the hospital were a luxury which might be dispensed with, without impairing the effective force of a Mission station. Whereas the time may come when that chapel alone will be filled with worshippers which is erected in the same compound as the hospital and built by the same hands. The poor in India cherish a vague idea that no new religion is worth much consideration that does not pity the aching body as well as the perishing soul. Indeed, it would be quite fair to say that for a vast number he only who is a

TEMPLE BY THE NAINI LAKE.

good physician, is ever likely to be sought as an apostle. "Show me your faith by your hospital" is a cry distinctly audible in India to-day.

If this be considered an exaggeration, the reader has only to listen to the demands made upon any one who is known in the village as a Christian preacher. Every one seems to take it for granted, until disillusioned, that because he can preach he can also practise.

The Padri was not a medical man. It is true he carried a medicine chest about with him, and gave away a good deal of its contents on every journey he made, but he did not pretend to do more than apply simple remedies to simple complaints. He always preferred trying to induce

POTTER SPINNING THE WHEEL (BANGALORE).

a patient to visit the hospital, however slight the need. Part of the joy of his missionary life was associated with the mission hospital. He was ever proclaiming its wonders, and nothing pleased him better than to find himself in a village whence some one at his suggestion had gone to the hospital, and returned, if not cured, at least relieved.

For then he would be visited by the grateful patient and his friends, and he would be entertained for hours with their vivid descriptions of the mighty works which they had seen done, and in their gratitude and admiration he would discern the first glint of the dawn in their minds of some sort of appreciation of the scope of the new religion.

Apart, however, from the joy it naturally brought him, weary as he was of watching the spectacle of unnecessary pain, the hospital in the background made it so much easier to preach. No one doubted the sincerity of the hospital doctor, and the authority of the Padri's message received confirmation from the success of the doctor's treatment. And even in those cases where disease had been so aggravated by delay that all treatment was vain, the gentleness of the doctor and his anxiety to heal produced an impression which was almost quite as useful to the Padri as a cure.

Sometimes, however, a sick man is too sceptical, too suspicious, to start on the long journey to the hospital alone. He has probably made many pilgrimages in search of health before, and yet never has he come into contact with either skill or compassion. Accordingly, if his life is to be saved, or his daily anguish mitigated, the missionary who has made his acquaintance will have to arrange to take the patient to the hospital himself.

CHAPTER XIII

FOLK-LORE

IT was to induce one such sick man to accompany him to the mission hospital that the Padri continued his journey after his interview with the Commissioner.

On his way one morning, as he was crossing the plain from one village surrounded by rice-growing swamps to another, he noticed a man scattering about what looked like his midday meal. The Padri liked nothing better than getting people to talk to him by the roadside, and scenting an opportunity here, he strolled over to him and asked him what he was doing.

"Nothing," said the man, apparently somewhat resenting the inquiry.

"Nothing?" replied the Padri, "but you don't call throwing good food about like this in these hard times nothing, do you?"

"But it is not good food," said the man.

"It looks good enough for me to eat, anyhow. It is cooked rice. Are you feeding the sparrows or the ants?"

"Neither."

"Then why not give it to the hungry?"

"That is just what I am doing."

"But why put them to the trouble, the unnecessary trouble, of scraping it up again? Why not give it them yourself and give it

graciously. You can't expect much gratitude from people to whom you fling food like this."

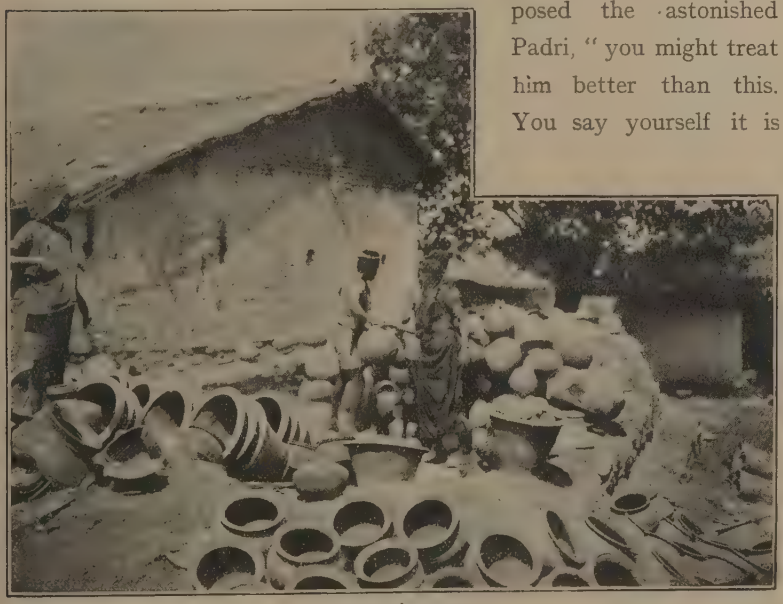
The man remained silent. Then the Padri told him a funny story, and having succeeded in making him smile, he appealed to his good

MOULDING THE CLAY—A POTTER OF BANGALORE.

nature to satisfy the curiosity of one who found himself, he said, a pilgrim in a strange land, anxious to learn its customs and traditions. This humility broadened the smile, and the man, first expressing his doubt as to the reality of the Padri's ignorance, proceeded very shyly (for there is nothing a Hindu shrinks from more than exposing his

traditions to Western mockery) to explain what he was doing. It appeared, to cut short his story, that the country needed rain, and needed it very badly, and the people had almost lost heart. There was, however, one hope remaining to them, and that was to be put to the test this very day. A sort of demigod was expected to visit the earth. His history was not exactly a fragrant one, but that did not affect his influence over the great god Siva. If they could only secure the demigod's interest he would surely, on his return to heaven, bespeak for them the mercy of Siva and induce him to send rain. So they were scattering food about for the demigod.

"But surely," interposed the astonished Padri, "you might treat him better than this. You say yourself it is



A POTTER'S YARD.

not good food. And now I examine it I see it is not. I should say you will be more likely to offend than to propitiate him. Surely your god can distinguish between good and bad food."

"No, we shan't offend him. We shall excite his pity. After a few mouthfuls he will post off to the upper regions as hard as he can tear, and flinging himself at Siva's feet, he will implore him to send rain, for, he will say, the people are reduced to food like this, and he will show the awful stuff we have given him."

CHAPTER XIV

STREET PREACHING

BROODING over the condition of the Hindu mind revealed by the story just told, the Padri arrived a little later at the village where his patient lived, or rather existed, and arrangements were made to leave the next morning. Having an evening to spare, the Padri spent it in the village square preaching. It must not, however, be supposed that preaching meant a Bible opened and a text chosen and expounded as is the custom in a place of worship. Nothing of the sort. The very formality of a procedure like that would have defeated the Padri's object. What he did was to make his way to the sacred tree (referred to elsewhere) and there, finding the usual evening gossips seated chatting together, he attempted to join in the discussion. It turned out that they were talking about the weather, but much more earnestly than is the custom when men meet in England. Nearly every man under that tree owned land, and it was a matter of the utmost importance that they were considering. The last two or three years had all disappointed them. Rain had either failed them altogether or fallen at the wrong time, and disaster this year would mean utter ruin for many of them. It was too early yet for any one to decide definitely what the prospects were, but it was ominously late for the still cloudless skies to continue. Clouds had been seen earlier than this in most years, and one man had made up his mind already

that there was to be yet another failure and then a famine such as few would survive. In a curious world like this most men are attracted by a gloomy forecast, and the crowd was thoroughly enjoying itself, recalling gruesome reminiscences of the last big famine, when the Padri approached, and, space being accorded him, seated himself at a corner where he could face the people.

Conversation flagged a little, of course, at first, and the Padri had to work hard by means of question and then anecdote to induce the people to admit him into unconstrained fellowship with them. Every one knew that he was a missionary, and the atmosphere was charged with expectancy. It was almost impossible for the Padri to make even the most trivial remark without exciting some suspicion in his hearers that if they could only detect it some criticism of Hinduism intended to unsettle their faith (as we say in England) was wrapped up therein. The Hindu is as sensitive to any reflection upon his creed as we are, and he feels he is unduly handicapped in any defence of it as much by our stupidity as by any flaw in his argument. Whenever he tries to put his beliefs into words for the benefit of a foreigner he feels ashamed, it is true, of some elements which he himself cannot help suspecting are just a little childish, but he also feels equally annoyed. Western density makes explanation so difficult. It irritates the Hindu, especially when that same density which makes the Christian ask so many awkward questions about the mysteries of Hinduism deprives him, apparently, of any consciousness of the difficulties which the Hindu finds in Christianity. So when the missionary is speaking, it often happens that his hearers are too intently watching for opportunities to convict him of as many absurdities as they themselves are conscious of, as Hindus, to derive all the good they might from what he is saying.

On this particular occasion, under the guidance of the Padri, the conversation passed from the prospects of the crops to the attitude of the Heavenly Father towards the needy farmer—whether God really cared for him enough to send rain this season or not. "If He doesn't we shall all be ruined; there will be famine," observed some one in the crowd. Whereupon the Padri ventured to ask quietly with much ingenuousness, with the air of one seeking information, whether, considering the moral condition of the country, its perjury and its profligacy, the last speaker in that case would consider the country to be at all unjustly treated. No one in the crowd seemed prepared to make any comment except a few old men, who rejoiced to find an authority like the Padri expressing so impressively an opinion they themselves had so long cherished, that the country had, as we should say, "gone

BRAHMIN GURU, MYSORE.

to the dogs." Their agreement, however, was not of much use to the Padri, as it was evident from the amusement of the younger men that it was based upon the disregard shown towards the wisdom of age rather than that shown towards the law of God. But the question, as the Padri skilfully put it, certainly sobered the crowd for a few moments. Not a few were surprised to hear how grave certain offences were of which they knew themselves to be guilty, and for the first time, perhaps, they wondered whether it might be true that when they clamoured for rain the Almighty had some demand to make from them in return. The next question the Padri asked, after a Brahmin who scented danger had tried to divert the trend of the conversation by a question concerning the number of children the Padri had, was whether any one had ever found it profitable to ask the Almighty to send rain. No one seemed quite certain what he meant, so he seized the opportunity to describe the Christian practice of prayer, and the curiosity of the people was so great that even the Brahmin remained silent, and the Padri rejoiced in quite ten minutes' uninterrupted speech upon so important a subject. When he finished some one, over-anxious to show that the Hindu was as wise as the Christian, began to speak about Hanuman-worship—the worship of the monkey god—much to the chagrin of the Brahmin, who made one or two ineffectual attempts to silence his indiscreet friend.

At this moment a cloud of dust enveloped them, making speech impossible, and a stately procession of huge bulls passed by, followed by the oddest assortment of cattle a farmer ever consented to recognize as such. Here was another opportunity for the Padri.

"Where are those cattle going?" he asked, as soon as he was free to speak.

"Home," said some one.

"But no one is driving them," said the Padri.

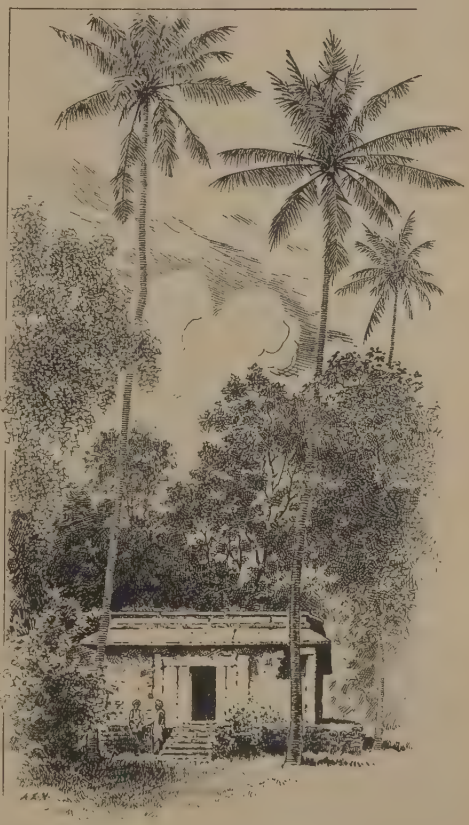
"No, there is no need; they all know the way."

"You are deceiving me, surely," replied the Padri. "Do you mean that that black cow will find its own way untended to the house of Basamma, who lives so far off? Why, it will have to turn first to the left, then take the second turning to the right, and even then won't be home. Surely it enters some one else's house by mistake occasionally."

The crowd smiled suspiciously. No one could be quite so ignorant of the ways of village cattle. They waited for the Padri's point. They knew one was coming.

"So then the cattle are wiser than their masters," said the Padri gravely, with the air of one summing up after weighing a lot of evidence.

"How is that?" asked



From photo by [REV. A. R. SLATER.

A SIVA TEMPLE.

the man who had introduced Hanuman-worship into the conversation.

"'The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but My people do not know, do not consider.' They worship this"—and the Padri stooped and peered into the fast gathering gloom in the direction of a stone close by, whereon the figure of a monkey was carved. "Surely that doesn't represent Him who created the heavens and the earth. If it does God is not one likely to pity your suffering, and you need not expect rain. If it doesn't, it is blasphemy, and it is not surprising that rain is withheld. Insult the Supreme Spirit by such a caricature as that, and you can hardly expect him to listen to your prayers."

But the crowd was not at all disconcerted. Here was a fine opportunity for debate, for hair-splitting.

"What do we know about such things?" said a carpenter. "It was the custom of our forefathers. We have inherited it. Are we wiser than they?"

"And we don't identify God with a monkey," said the schoolmaster. "But God is everywhere, therefore why not in a monkey, why not in that stone? We must have something visible and tangible to worship, else our minds wander all over creation. *Is* not God in that stone?"

"Besides," interposed the Brahmin, who, like the war-horse, had scented the battle afar off, "we worship an ideal monkey—Hanuman, king of the monkey tribe, who, centuries ago, helped our Prince Rama to find his wife Sita, whom Revanna had carried off. Why disturb these ignorant men with your new-fangled ideas?" and the speaker swept the crowd with an incriminating finger that left no one excluded from the charge of ignorance. "You have your god, Jesus Christ. Keep him; he is best for your people. We have our god Hanuman. He is best for us; we want no other."

The Padri was delighted. Every ear was now captured. All listlessness had given place to eagerness, and the expression on every face showed that whether they were seeking truth or not, they intended to debate serious issues.

FETCHING WATER FROM THE WELL.

"The question is not what form of worship is acceptable to us men, but whether God will recognize the worship of Hanuman. You want rain badly, so the matter is important. But let that point pass. Let me ask another question, may I?"

"Certainly," said the Brahmin, and the crowd became very silent.

"These many years have the people bowed down before Hanuman.

Is any one the better for it? You have led your children in their youth to this shrine, and you have introduced Hanuman to them as their god. Has this devotion made any of them better men, better women? Has it ever inspired them to cherish this thought, to restrain that? You know the history of the village better than I. Tell me what induces you to defend and encourage the worship of Hanuman. It seems to me that the child who is shown such an image as that, the image of a monkey and then is told that that is God, is doomed. He is ruined by his own parents. 'Like god, like worshipper,' that is your own proverb. The Most High God would inspire His worshippers to become loving and good. Has Hanuman ever done so?"

"The story of Hanuman," replied the Brahmin in his most impressive manner, "teaches two lessons. Obedience to one's superiors is the first. Did not Hanuman obey Prince Rama? The nurture of one's physical strength is the second. If Hanuman had not been so muscular what service could he have rendered to Rama? And these two lessons are just what these people need to learn. What more do they need?"

The Padri realized that his Brahmin friend had not exactly scored a point, but rather delivered himself into his hands. He therefore made a great effort, and drew a portrait of the so-called superior to whom the Brahmin had referred, and then sketched the kind of service (often leading to prison) he too often demanded. The effort was appreciated, and with the approval of the amused crowd the Padri returned to the theme with which he had started—the threatened famine, the possibility of its being averted by the mercy of God. An old man came to his assistance who had hitherto been conspicuous

for his silence and gravity. "There is no doubt as to the reason for all these famines and pestilences. The clouds are full of water. They often hang over the land for days and weeks, but pass away without breaking. Sin is the reason."

The Padri was delighted with the old man's co-operation. The old man was in earnest. The Padri did not want to discuss famine

WATER CARRIER.

as an expression of God's wrath, but he did want to stimulate sleepy consciences, so he urged the old man to deliver his soul on the subject more freely.

"What do you mean by sin?" he asked.

The answer came immediately. "Eating meat, drinking alcohol, breaking caste. The world is turned upside down. No one reverences the traditions now. The old man may speak; no one listens."

The disconcerted Padri was opening his mouth to provide his audi-

ence with a deeper and truer definition of sin, when he was forestalled by an impatient Colporteur who was travelling with him for the purpose of selling Christian literature. He had been chafing to speak for the last half-hour, and the Padri was glad to rest for a time. The Colporteur was not an educated man, exactly. He knew his Bible, however, and though he could not speak grammatically, he spoke like an ancient prophet about the horrible corruption around him. The Padri himself had no idea how bad it was until he heard the Colporteur that evening, and, not being a Pharisee, his own sense of sin revived. He felt it would be a relief to cry for mercy on his own behalf as well as on behalf of the audience. "Surely," thought the Padri, when the Colporteur had finished and a silence reigned that could almost be felt, "surely they know what sin means now. These people have been introduced to their own hearts at last. Now perhaps they can appreciate the Lord Jesus."

The Padri, when he rose once more to speak, faced an audience whose dark inscrutable eyes gazed into his with an expression in them that inspired him to do his best for the Lord Jesus who came to seek and to save, and for the poor wayward souls before him who needed seeking and saving so much.

He began with a quotation from "one of their own poets"—

> Immured in the senses' prison-house,
> Bound by the chains of one's own mind,
> Fast held in the grip of warring inclination,
> How can deliverance come to one so bound?

The familiar words went home. There was little need to elaborate. A few sentences were quite sufficient to subdue most of the listeners to that sad mood of which the ancient cry, "Who shall deliver me from

A COUNTRY ROAD.

the body of this death?" is still the most adequate expression. Then repeating, "How can deliverance come to one so bound?" he paused and quietly said: "You know; there is no one here who does not know—you need a Guru." ["Guru" is untranslatable. Let "Saviour" be understood by the reader.]

The audience agreed but they made no sign. No one stirred or spoke, but the Padri felt their agreement in every fibre of his soul

He proceeded: "But what kind of Guru? The countryside teems with Gurus. Processions with Gurus at their head are at this moment filling hundreds of towns with the blare of their trumpets and the beat of their drums. But are they really Gurus? Are they worthy of all the reverence and the tribute money they receive? Can such as they 'deliver' any one from this 'prison-house of the senses'?

Have they ever 'delivered' any one? Can any one here testify on their behalf that his Guru has 'delivered' him?

"Alas! the experience of these many years has disillusioned you all. You may praise your Guru for many virtues, for many acts of kindness, but no one here owes him one word of thanks for long-needed, sorely-needed 'deliverance.' To bestow it was beyond his powers.

"Despair has seized you. And yet the perfect Guru cannot but be, if only you could but find him. A heaven-sent Guru there is, there must be. Your own poet has announced him. Listen!

A Guru for the world there is,
A Guru for all men there is.
There are who know him,
And they obtain salvation,
While those who know him not fall into hell.

"The question for you all then is: Who and where is this Guru? Is he to be found among mortal men, sinful mortal men? The question answers itself. The smile it raises answers the question. No; incontrovertibly no! Is he among the gods, then? Why, they too have fallen, if the scriptures have not libelled them. Again we need the poet's inspiration—

The Guru? He is Paramatma (over soul = God)
The disciple? He's the soul.
He who joins the two together
In living union, he alone
Is Guru sure and true.

It must be so. The poet cannot err. The Guru the world needs is none other than God Himself. The 'deliverance' we crave is that which none other than God can effect for us. Do you not now see where you have gone astray? You have hitherto sought refuge in

men, in the gods. No wonder they have failed you. No wonder you despair. It is an Avatar you need. ["Avatar" means "Incarnation." a word which the Eastern world uses and appreciates far more than the Western.] Who but an Avatar can forgive sin and effect the 'living union'?"

Here the Padri sketched the life of Jesus, and once again Christ passed to and fro among sinful, diseased and sorrowing men; and under the spell of the Padri's simple eloquence the mists of the ages rolled away for a moment and the audience saw Him in that little Indian village as the common people who heard Him gladly saw Him so many weary years ago.

CHAPTER XV

A MEDICAL MISSIONARY

THE next day the Padri left with his patient, and in due time arrived at the Mission Hospital. Long before he actually reached the place he met with indications of its popularity. He passed a man hobbling along leaning upon sticks, a woman lying prostrate in a rough country cart, an exhausted patient resting for a while under the trees by the roadside—all making their way towards a substantial block of buildings visible for miles round, whose very appearance promised relief if not a cure.

The door of the out-patients' surgery was blocked by a crowd. To have passed in by that entrance would have required some force. No one seemed disposed to risk his chance of an early interview with the doctor by making way even for a sahib.

The Padri, however, was in no hurry. Pausing only to notice that expression upon almost every face which denotes long days and nights of constant pain, he sought for another entrance into the hospital, and finding one he seated his sick friend in a comfortable corner somewhere, and then set out on a tour of inspection. Everywhere there was activity. Young men, students, were busy with microscopes, engaged in the attempt to identify weird minute objects which, they had been told, had all in their day played havoc with

the blood of some unfortunate patient. Others were stooping over cots, dressing wounds. An English nurse, in professional attire, rapidly crossed the quadrangle with an antiseptic. Seated in the shade of the verandahs or on the edges of their cots were patients in all stages of convalescence, discussing each other's symptoms when interest in their own flagged.

"FULL UP INSIDE!"

In a remote corner stood the women's ward. There the lady doctor was evidently being interviewed by a group of women. Probably one of the number had been brought by the rest. If so, it meant that the doctor represented their last hope. As the poor girl, assisted by her friends, described her misery, surely the doctor was to be envied. The trained intellect understood what needed doing. The skilled fingers felt equal to the task which was to be entrusted to them, and the doctor knew that a few minutes under chloroform would remove the cause, and a few weeks' rest in a quiet ward would disperse the effects

of a trouble responsible for the intolerable anguish of many months.

The sight of the women's ward comforted the Padri with the assurance that though he had failed the previous night to win by speech those who evidently belonged to the higher castes, yet there were other Christian forces here which could not possibly be resisted. The street preacher might reasonably be mistaken for a professional speaker engaged in the task of pushing his own particular religious sect at the expense of some one else's, but no such misjudgment could be made by the stately Brahmin waiting on the steps of the verandah of the women's ward to know the result of an operation upon a wife or daughter whom he had unhesitatingly committed to Christian love within.

Presently, having feasted his eyes upon all these things long enough to satisfy himself for the moment, he bestirred himself and made his way to the surgery through the doctor's own private door, and there saw a state of things which raised his spirits higher than ever. The doctor was practically unapproachable by a mere European, so the Padri took a chair and bided his time. A man was having his eye examined by the doctor. Blind—quite blind—was the decision, and both men seemed curiously pleased at the totality of the loss of sight. Their satisfaction was explained a moment later, when it appeared from something they said that the operation to restore sight which one of them was ready to perform, and the other was equally ready to undergo, required blindness to be complete before it could be attempted; and now the day for it could be fixed. Fixed the day was, and the man, led by a little boy, went away almost as happy as if the bandages were about to be taken off his eyes, rather than like one with the ordeal of an operation still before him.

Hardly had the old man stretched out his hand to feel for his little guide when the doctor had seized a stethoscope and was examining another patient. The result of the examination was that the patient was asked to make arrangements to lie up in the hospital as an in-patient for several days. Of course the man demurred. That was only natural, with so much work to be done in his fields. The doctor devoted a few more minutes to endeavouring to persuade him, and then handed him over, still undecided, to the blandishments of a student. Other patients more docile were impatiently waiting, and it was not fair to them to spend too much time over a man who begrudged the doctor the few days' residence in hospital he asked for.

TRAVELLING BY CHAIR IN THE INDIAN HILLS.

The next patient was a little baby covered with sores. Itch, said somebody hastily. But the doctor hurried the father away for a few words in private, and when he came back the father instructed the mother to remain on at the hospital with the child till he came for her, and it was evident that the doctor's diagnosis was not quite so summary.

Thus the morning passed away, and as the sun rose higher in the sky the temperature in the crowded room steadily and remorselessly

rose also, and the perspiration poured down the doctor's face in streams; but still he worked on. As the hour drew near when other duties claimed him, and the crowd showed few signs of diminishing, the doctor redoubled his efforts, and the Padri sitting close by watched once more a display of human effort which, though he had often seen it, never ceased to fascinate him. It seemed to the bewildered Padri as though now the doctor were at one and the same time feeling some one's pulse with one hand, while with the other he was sounding another man's chest; as though one eye were peering into the recesses of some one's throat, while the other was fixed upon a curvature in some one else's spine. Occasionally he would hurry a patient away for an examination in a private room; but the tired assistants had barely time to heave a sigh of relief and wipe their heated brows before the doctor was back again in the surgery, and the tide of human misery once more closed round him.

It is just possible that some of the out-patients would have preferred a more leisurely examination. It might have flattered them, and, perhaps, comforted them, could they have been ushered into a room like a church vestry by a page-boy in buttons, and found the doctor with a huge ledger-like book open before him, ready and apparently eager to take notes while they described their symptoms. But with so much to do and so few to do it there was no time for such luxuries, and men who needed nothing but a dose of Epsom salts would find themselves in possession of the order for it long before they had finished all they wanted to say about a head in a whirl and certain little black spots dancing in the air before them.

The amenities of the consulting-room were reserved for the in-patients. The Padri always felt that the beneficence of the doctor's

reign was nowhere more manifest than inside the hospital among the cots in the wards, and he considered that the best time to see the doctor was towards sundown, when he paid his farewell visit for the day. It was not any medical or surgical work that he did then that attracted the Padri. Very little of such work remained to be done by that time. It was the kindly leisurely intercourse between patient and doctor that was so pleasant to watch. After the heat and bustle of the long Indian day it was in itself refreshing to know that the sun was so soon to sink below the horizon. Every one in the hospital seemed to feel like a tired traveller arrived at his halting-place for the night, relieved of his burden and stretched out by its side, at peace with himself and the whole world.

CATCHING(?) A TRAIN.

All over the hospital patients in easy undress might be seen sitting on the verandahs, apparently just content to do nothing but gaze out into space and let the evening breeze fan their faces ; while others grouped together in the gathering shadows would be conversing in low tones, their voices, usually far too harsh for a hospital, now subdued by the hour into something more in harmony with a house of pain.

Into this small world of whispers and twilight the doctor would

come fresh from his cold bath, arrayed in a clean white suit, with the air of one with leisure and readiness for anything and anybody.

He would always have an objective. Every one understood that, but no one knew when he would reach it, least of all himself.

The evening when the Padri accompanied him it was Ward D. But in Ward A somebody's bandages were too tight, and the pressure had to be relaxed before the doctor could pass on. In the corridor outside an old woman lay in wait for him, to consult him about a case in her village which she thought she might very well treat herself if only the doctor would tell her what to do. In Ward B a garrulous old man began a long story about an epidemic that broke out in his village half a century ago, and had it not been for a pitiful sob close by the doctor would have gone very little farther that night. Behind a pillar in the verandah a young woman was weeping. She ought to have left days ago. Nothing more could be done for her baby, but she would not believe it. She felt that here, where such marvels were daily being wrought, if any one had to leave unhealed it would be on account of lack of pity and not lack of skill. So she had been waiting to throw herself at the doctor's feet and make one more attempt to soften his heart and save her baby. Somehow he succeeded in quieting the poor girl, and he passed along to Ward C with a heart almost as sad as hers.

Here glancing around, his eye fell upon some one who it was obvious was not as comfortable as he might be. A little examination soon showed what was wrong, and the doctor decided to put it right at once. That required an instrument of some sort. He set off to fetch it himself. It was not very far that he had to go, but it threw him in the path of a patient who did not release him until he had put

the doctor in possession of some special feature in his case which the patient evidently thought had never been thoroughly investigated.

In this fashion Ward D was ultimately reached, and that little something accomplished which an hour or more ago he had told his wife would only take him five minutes. That he was then practically ready and waiting to take her out for a short walk and a breath of fresh air, and that if she did not make haste and get her hat on it would be he who would have to wait, was probably as sincere a conviction of his when he started for the hospital as any he had ever cherished in his life.

HALTING FOR THE NIGHT.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PASSING OF YASHODAMMA

IT is now time to return to the affairs of Narayana and Satyawati. The family never recovered from the outrageous scene at the wedding. It was accustomed to bickerings; it had grown familiar with the constant strife of Yashodamma and Sundaramma. No one at last expected them to be civil to each other. But the men had never before felt called upon to interfere and separate the two by physical force. That indignity had been spared them.

It was evident that the household would have to be broken up. The different families would have to separate. Yashodamma and Sundaramma could no longer live under the same roof. It was only a question now who should leave the old home first, and that was unexpectedly decided by the old man Lakshmi Narayana, who one day slipped away and refrained from sending any message until he had gone too far to fear pursuit. Then he sent a letter to say that he had started on a pilgrimage. He was never seen again. Whether he ever reached Benares or died on the road no one ever learned, and it is to be feared, no one ever cared to learn. Meekness and docility are negative qualities. They have to be

allied to positive virtues if a man wishes to be missed when he vanishes.

When time came for Narayana to return to his school, where, busy by day as a master, he was studying by night for the degree he wished to take before beginning his legal career, he determined to take his wife and mother with him. The arrangement would not he knew be the best he could wish to make for his wife, but he could not possibly leave his mother with Venkatesha and Sundaramma. That was clear. There was nothing else for him to do if he wished to consider his mother's feelings at all. The day, therefore, was fixed for the departure, and Narayana was making the necessary preparations, when something happened that every friend of Satyawati regarded as providential. Yashodamma died. That terrible scourge, cholera, never long absent in the East, laid hold of her and carried her off. Her children did all they could for her. The attendant on the god in the village temple was called in. No one else had any better knowledge of medicine, it is true, but that is no reason why he should have been credited with any. If a Government hospital had been anywhere near, Narayana would have sent for the apothecary, but the nearest hospital was far out of their reach. So the pujari was summoned. His association with one mystery probably recommended him in the eyes of the people for dealing with another. If the village god was amenable to him the human body ought not to resist him long.

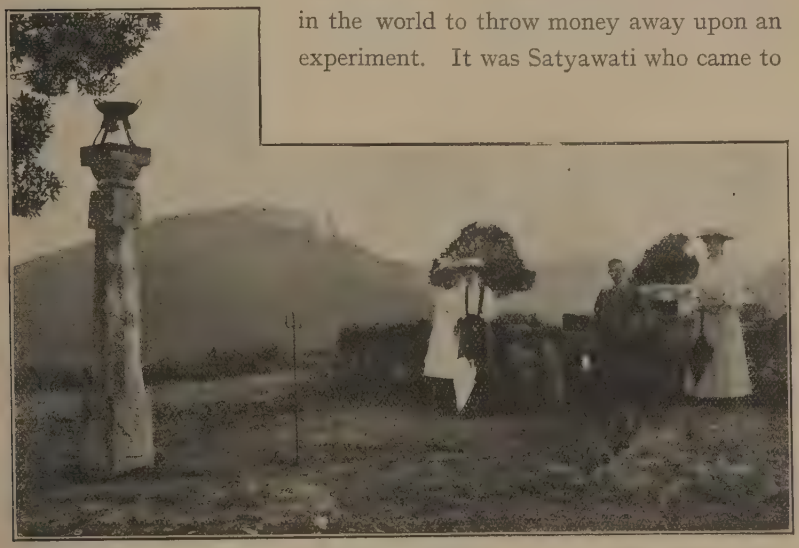
But Yashodamma had better have been left to Nature, for it is much to be feared that the pujari's treatment only hastened her end. First of all, simple as the case was to any experienced eye, he diagnosed it wrongly. And then promising a speedy cure if his in-

structions were followed, he asked for a sum of money sufficient to buy all the medicine in stock for miles round, and deluged the poor old woman with a lot of nasty stuff the vile taste of which alone disposed of any remote chance of recovery Yashodamma may ever have had. As the day wore on and the family grew more alarmed, they began to grow impatient also. They pressed the pujari to stop the constant vomiting, if he could not do anything else. It appeared that that was what he intended to do if they would only give him time, but a sudden cessation of such a symptom, unpleasant though it was, being dangerous, he intended to arrest it gradually. He was attacking the disease at its very root and source. To take any notice of a small matter like sickness was absurd, he said.

But in spite of his efforts and his explanations, the patient grew obviously worse. Other symptoms appearing, the pujari at last recognized the disease he was playing with, and realized that if he wished to make any more money out of the relatives he would have to make the most of the next few hours.

Accordingly, he simulated indignation at some neglect in the nursing of the patient, which, he said, was the cause of the patient's collapse, and then declared that there was but one medicine left that could do any good, and the efficacy of that medicine depended upon its being given at once. Unfortunately, he said, his supply of it was useless; it had gone bad. No one else in the village had heard of the name even, so there was nothing else to be done but allow the pujari to buy the ingredients and prepare it his own way. That would cost money, of course, he said, addressing Venkatesha, the eldest son. But he might just as well have addressed his stone god in the temple, for Venkatesha declared that even if the medicine could be procured for a single rupee

he could not find one for him. That was not true. As a matter of fact, Venkatesha could have found a good many rupees if he had wished to do so, and it is probable that if he had had any confidence in the pujari's medicine he would have been willing to risk a few. But he knew cholera when he saw it, whatever else he did not know, and he had never heard of any one recovering from it, no matter what medicine they took, and he was the last man in the world to throw money away upon an experiment. It was Satyawati who came to



A BURNING GHAT.

the rescue. Going to her strong box, she brought out one of her wedding ornaments and gave it into her husband's hands to sell. But ashamed to dispose of presents which not his but her relatives had given to his wife, he refused to accept the gift. She insisted.

"If your mother lives the jewel can always be recovered. If she dies who knows how to bring her back?"

"But," said Narayana, "my mother can't possibly recover, why should you throw away your jewel. If I had given it to you myself I might have consented to take it from you again as a loan. If I had ever given you a present it would be different, but all the ornaments you have it is your people who gave them. For me to take any to benefit my family, even a dying mother, would be shameful. It would be sheer robbery. I can't do it."

"Nonsense!" replied Satyawati; "why should you hesitate like this when I offer them to you so willingly. So long as you remain in health and strength, what do I care if we dispose of every jewel I possess? While there is life there is hope. We are bound to try every remedy, even though we suspect the doctor. We are now wasting time. Please, don't argue any more. Sell this jewel at once and let the pujari have what he demands," and Satyawati thrust the little jewel into her husband's unwilling hands and resumed her place at Yashodamma's bedside.

There indeed she had spent every hour since the old woman had been taken ill. Whatever vexation of spirit Yashodamma had caused her seemed to pass out of her memory the moment Satyawati found herself called upon to serve. Moistening the patient's dry lips, massaging her hands and feet, fanning her to keep the flies away and to circulate what air there was in the horrible sick-room, tending her in every way so carefully and compassionately, undeterred by incidents which might well have alarmed or disgusted a less heroic nurse, she would have been mistaken by a stranger for the sick woman's own

daughter with years of a mother's tenderness to repay, rather than a daughter-in-law with absolutely nothing but unkindness, or at the best indifference, to remember.

Savitri was useful in many ways. Little Site did what she could. Sundaramma would weep and moan when any one drew near, but no one offered to relieve Satyawati as nurse. When she did hurry away

BATHING IN THE SACRED CAUVERY RIVER.

for a hasty meal her place was filled under protest by a substitute as incapable as she was scared.

At last that mysterious change occurred in the patient's condition which the most careless, the most inexperienced, could not fail to perceive. As soon as they realized what it meant, they ran out into the street, haggard with terror, shrieking for the doctor. He came, but only to hang his head in humiliation, and confess his impotence.

But there was another man in the town who professed to practise, and he was more equal to the occasion. The pujari's brow was like brass, but even he felt he ought no longer to take advantage of the credulity of children weeping over a mother's death-bed. The new man's impudence and heartlessness knew no limitations at all. Provided they gave him a sum not less than three rupees he promised a cure within two hours, and of course they gave it to him. What else could they do at such a time? They would probably have given him a little more if he had asked for more. The wonder is that he did not.

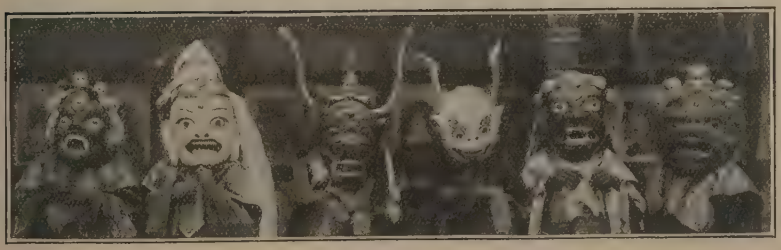
It was soon evident, however, that again they had been deceived, and then the family seemed to lose their heads. Whatever medicine they could lay their hands upon, if only some one could testify that he or she had heard of its efficacy, that medicine they forced down the dying woman's throat.

Yashodamma suffered this treatment for a little while, and then she refused to submit any longer. She made signs to her children to leave her in peace, and then closing her eyes she lay quite still, apparently waiting for death. Ten or fifteen minutes elapsed. The silence became intolerable, then some one made a movement which seemed to rouse the old woman. She opened her eyes, and fixed them upon Satyawati, who, in response to some appeal in them, bent over and listened. The last message came very slowly and very painfully, but it was quite audible.

"You have been very good to me. You have been the very Queen of Heaven, great Lakshmi, to my house. I have sinned against you sadly; forgive; forget. When the time comes for you and me to live once more on earth I pray that I may be born as your daughter.

Then as you have ministered to me so will I minister to you and thus repay some of the debt I owe you."

Yashodamma then made an effort to cover her face with her hands, but her strength failed her. A moment later she died, and the tyranny of the Indian mother-in-law for Satyawati ceased for ever.



A GROUP OF HINDUS IN MASKS.

CHAPTER XVII

WITH CHRIST

WE left the Padri at the hospital. A few more days spent in happy intercourse with all sorts and conditions of men, and his visit came to an end. The time had come for him to make his usual half-yearly journey to a corner of his huge district where, in addition to a number of Hindu friends, he had a few isolated Christian families to visit.

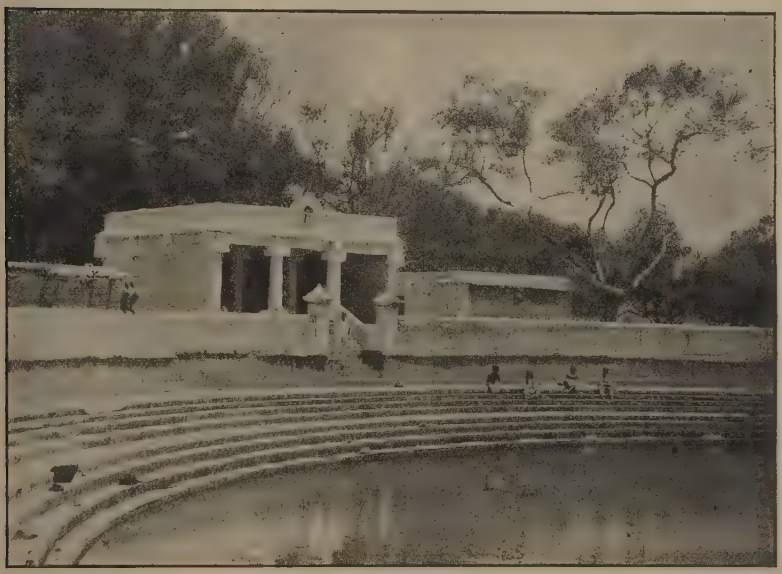
His route lay along one of the great Indian trunk roads, which stretched for leagues across the plain almost as straight as the flight of an arrow. For long distances, rows of trees on either side spread their branches across till they interlaced and covered the road either with dark velvet shadows or intricate lace-like patterns of flickering light.

Here and there troops of monkeys might often be seen crawling lazily on all fours from one side of the road to the other, and everywhere the green parrot flew shrieking from tree to tree.

A journey this way in the cool season was an experience the whole world might covet, but later on in the year, after the leaves had fallen, when the white road lay exposed to the sun, and the dust lying inches deep rose in clouds at every step, travelling became an experience from which the whole world might well shrink.

The Padri's half-yearly visit was to one man, at least, a great joy

which a peep into Paradise could hardly have exceeded. Anticipated for weeks beforehand, it was talked about for weeks after. Long before the Padri came into sight Shantappa the Christian would take up his station at the foot of a certain huge tamarind tree whence he could obtain the best possible view of the country round, and there



A BATHING TANK.

he would sit gazing for hours in the direction of his long-expected friend's approach. Not a cloud of dust rose in the distance but he would leap to his feet staring at it with excited eyes until he knew whether it was the Padri or some other traveller it heralded.

Shantappa needed and deserved all the joy the Padri's visit could

bestow, for he was a leper. Years ago, when a boy, he was famous for a beautiful voice and a charming face, but the years had been very cruel. But while others would avert their gaze or regard him with repulsion, the Padri never by so much as the flicker of an eyelid gave the sensitive leper a moment's uneasiness. During the interval between the visits, the disease would make fearful inroads upon poor Shantappa's appearance, and it was often difficult for the Padri to conceal the pity he felt when they met in the merciless glare of the sun, after a separation perhaps a little longer than usual.

To see the two together gave one a lesson in the cure of souls one never forgot. It did not matter how many days the Padri's visit lasted ; from the hour of his arrival to that of his departure Shantappa hardly left him alone for a moment. It was just heaven for Shantappa to sit somewhere near and watch the beloved face, with something like the wistful expression in his swollen eyes of an expectant terrier. It was joy unbounded if the Padri would only lay down his pen and invite him to talk. Shantappa had no sense of the relative value of topics. No doubt ever disturbed his mind that the Padri was not as interested in his latest encounter with a sceptic as in his account of a recent attempt made by the village burglar to scrape a hole in the side of his house and rob him of the little pile of cloths which constituted his stock-in-trade.

As a matter of fact, the Padri never did grow weary of Shantappa's conversation, but if it could be said that he was more interested in one topic than another that topic would be Shantappa's dreams. In those he displayed unaffected interest. He remembered them as long as Shantappa did himself, and apparently he interpreted them pretty much as Shantappa did. Here is one of them—

CORNER OF AN INDIAN TEMPLE.

One night after what had seemed to Shantappa an endless day of blank despair, he went to bed and finally to sleep. Suddenly, some time in the middle of the night, he was awakened by a clear voice calling him by name. He sat up to find himself, bathed by a soft white light, looking up into the face of some one whom he could not help thinking he must have seen before, although he could not recognize him. Every instinct warned Shantappa that he was in the

presence of a great Prince, so he salaamed humbly, and bent his face to the ground.

"Shantappa," said the voice, "you seem very weary; indeed you must be tired out. Your cross must be exceedingly heavy; indeed it must be like lead. But have patience. Carry it a little longer, only a little longer, and it shall one day soon be exchanged for a crown of flowers. Patience, Shantappa," and repeating the last two words the visitor vanished, and Shantappa went to sleep again. But from the moment he awoke in the early morning until the day of his death Shantappa, though he might call it a dream in ordinary conversation, had no doubt in his own mind that it was a real incident and that the great Prince was the Lord Jesus Christ.

How Shantappa passed the time between the Padri's visits is a mystery. Letters passed between them, of course, and Shantappa in his would pour out his soul with the artlessness and trust of a little child. Rarely had he anything to say in the way of business to justify the expense of a postage stamp, not even the half-anna stamp of the cheap Indian postage, but he knew that if he wrote often enough it would be certain to elicit an answer from his friend, and a letter from the Padri was ample reward for all the trouble he took. It was no easy task for the leper to form his letters as the disease grew upon him, but he never ceased writing altogether till the end, by which time his fingers, such as remained of them, had become almost useless to him.

Once the Padri, overwhelmed by an accumulation of letters awaiting his return from a long journey, found himself obliged to engage the services of an amanuensis, and Shantappa received a letter written in a strange hand, with only the signature to attest its genuineness. The Padri never forgot the remonstrance he received, and ever after,

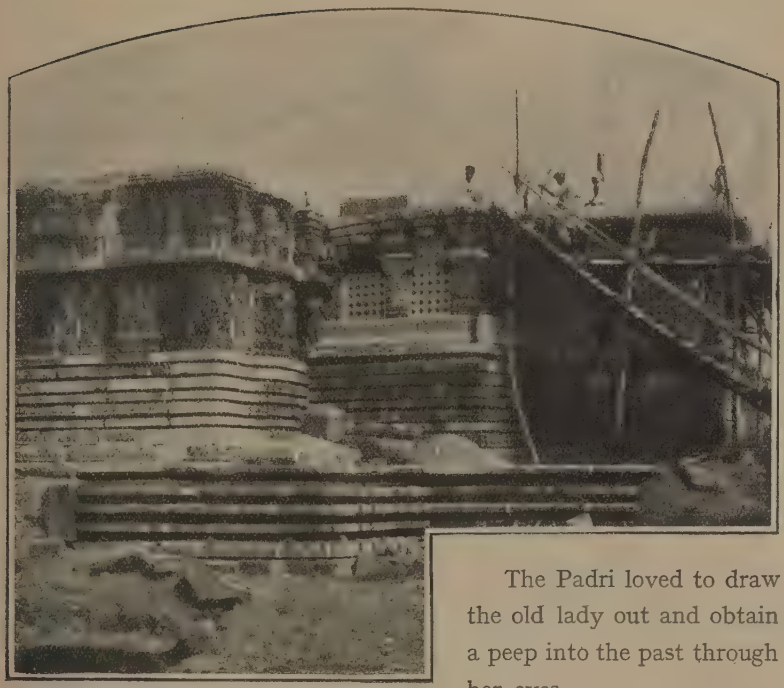
whenever he found it impossible to dispense with a secretary's services altogether, he always made an effort to append a postscript of a few lines after his signature. Petty, says some one. Yes, perhaps it was, but then Shantappa was a leper, and if that fact does not excuse him, he may be pardoned because he "loved much." And in that day when the secrets of all hearts are revealed, it may be that we shall all be convicted of pettiness of some kind or another. If so, let us hope that our little failing, whatever it may be, will not look any uglier than Shantappa's, for if it does, few of us will be able to claim excuse on the score of leprosy, or love of a pastor.

CHAPTER XVIII

WITHOUT CHRIST

IN the town where Shantappa lived the Padri had another friend, an old woman of Yashodamma's type. How the friendship started it would be hard to say, but it had grown until, like Shantappa, she never seemed happier than when she could secure a long chat with him. She no sooner heard of the Padri's arrival this time, than hastening to finish the household duties that fell to her lot, she plodded across the fields and presented herself in the open doorway of the tent. She had long passed the age when a Hindu woman takes any pains to conceal her mood, and it was not very long, therefore, before the Padri discovered that she had come in a very bad humour. Something had gone wrong in her home. The young wife of a newly married grandson had departed in some way from some old established domestic custom, and like the Scotch gardener who explained every misfortune as the result of the union between his country and England, Parvatamma (for that was the old woman's name) was inclined to blame the British Government for everything that happened to upset her.

"But," said the Padri, as soon as she had finished her complaint, "why are you so hard upon the British? They have never done you any harm, and they have done the country a great deal of good. Look at the roads and the bridges they have constructed."



REPAIRING AN INDIAN TEMPLE.

The Padri loved to draw the old lady out and obtain a peep into the past through her eyes.

"May fire consume them all," replied Parvatamma; "of what use will roads or bridges be to us when they have succeeded in abolishing all distinctions, and the Brahmin will have to eat off the Pariah's leaf? They won't even let a woman die as she likes. The very name of the widow's funeral pyre is almost forgotten already, thanks to your Government's edict."

"But have you yourself ever seen a woman burned?" asked the Padri, eager for her reminiscences.

"Yes, once," replied Parvatamma. "I was then about twenty years

old. By the time my husband died the order had been issued forbidding the practice."

"You actually saw the burning with your own eyes?"

"Yes; it was like this. We had a neighbour, a man about seventy years of age. He had just married for the third time a girl about seven years old, and then he died. The girl, of course, had never joined him. She was too young to leave her parents' house, too young, indeed, to shed any tears when she heard of her husband's death. Her father was a learned and devout Brahmin of the good old school, common enough then, but as rare now, in these black days, as the obedient and respectful daughter-in-law. Why he would not so much as look at food till all his ceremonies had been performed. It would be long past midday sometimes when he sat down to his meal. When the husband died the wife was playing in the street with other little girls. Directly he heard the news, the father called his daughter in, and taking her up in his arms he said, 'Little one, will you submit to the pyre? If you do you will be wafted straight up to heaven, there to be happy with your husband for ever. Not only so, but your husband's people and your father's will ever remember you with gratitude. Will you?' What did the child know? The pyre meant nothing to her. I don't suppose she knew the difference between a pyre and a picnic. Her father did not stop to explain. So, 'All right, father,' she said in her thin little girl's voice, and straightway forgot all about it till her father eager to get it all over (ah! they were Brahmins indeed in those days) began to cover her with silks and diamonds. She looked then as radiant as a bride. They formed a procession and conducted her with the head of the corpse in her lap to the bank of the river. Crowds followed to see the sight, and the roads became almost impassable. All

the matrons in the town brought their powders and their flowers, and when they arrived on the scene, began to distribute them. I remember I took some. It guaranteed me a long and happy married life when next I should be born on earth.

PLOUGHING.

"Well, the Brahmins placed the corpse with the widow at its side on the heap of dried wood, and, having recited a few powerful incantations, they gave the signal to the musicians. Immediately the air was filled with sound, and then they lit the wood in four places. But I can't go on; I am shaking now all over after all these years. The scene has bitten itself into my eyeballs. I can see every detail now."

"It sickens me," said the Padri, "who hear you describe the horrible thing. How it must have affected you who were close to it

and saw it with your own eyes, I can well imagine. Why do you blame a Government that put a stop to such an iniquity?"

"You mustn't revile sacred things," replied Parvatamma. "If you despise the scriptures, you will lose your eyesight. No matter how cruel a scripture may appear, one has to obey. Besides, I don't suppose that more than one out of every hundred thousand of good wives ever immolated themselves like that. But why do I discuss a matter like this with you? You can't understand. Well, they set fire to the pyre. I broke out into a cold perspiration, and started to run somewhere, anywhere where I could cover my eyes and think about something else, but my limbs failed me and I fell down. The flames rose higher until they reached the girl's body, and then she sprang to her feet with a cry of agony that could be heard above the trumpets and drums. She leaped to the ground, but her father rushed forward and seized her, and oh, how he cursed her! For a long hour then they had to perform I don't know how many ceremonies to atone for the girl's attempt to escape, and when at last the desecration was atoned for they once more laid the girl in her place by the side of the corpse. But I could endure it no longer. I ran home. That night I tossed about in a fever. For ten nights I could not sleep without being awakened by dreams in which I lived that awful day over again. I haven't forgotten it you see, yet. Even now when I recall it I am bathed in perspiration. They told me afterwards, those that stopped on, that to prevent the girl moving again they held her down with bamboos, and to drown her shrieks of agony they yelled to the musicians to play louder and yet more loudly, the Brahmins themselves shouting their incantations all the while to add to the din.

"A minute was sufficient in that fierce fire, they said. By that

time she became a heap of smoking cinders, and ever since a demon has haunted the place and no one passes along that road at night if he can avoid it.

"Ah," continued Parvatamma, "those were indeed days when wives were faithful and devout. Now when the husband comes home they don't even attempt to rise. In my time if a wife had dared to speak to her husband in public his mother would have killed her. Now the wife will chatter away to her husband before his mother and father without, so far as I can see, a trace even of any sense of propriety. But the days are evil. It is time I went; I am tired of it. Everything is altering for the worse," and Parvatamma paused for another instance. A moment's reflection, and she began again.

NATIVE PLOUGH.

"Two months ago a man here gave out that he was going to Benares. Would you believe it? he came back a week ago. Why, when I was young and a man went on a pilgrimage, no one ever expected to see him again. To speak of Benares was to speak of the grave. Now the echo of their departing footsteps has hardly died away when you hear of their return, and they come back as fresh and as lively as if they had been no farther than a stroll round their fields. They go away somewhere, but I have my suspicions whether it is to the holy city they go or not."

"Did you yourself ever make the pilgrimage?" the Padri asked.

"I? Did I ever go? Yes, I did, and so would you if you had been in my place. I was my husband's second wife, you know. You can't imagine what a time I had of it."

"Did she ill-treat you?" asked the Padri sympathetically.

"Beat me? What do you mean? How could she beat me?"

"Oh," said the Padri, enlightened by her astonished countenance, "you mean your husband married you after his first wife's death."

"Yes, of course I do, what else?"

"I see, your husband's first wife haunted you."

"Yes," replied Parvatamma. "I took medicine in bucketfuls. I visited holy places till I was footsore. I bathed in so many sacred pools that I was hardly ever dry, and yet I couldn't get rid of her. But one day I drew a magic square on the ground, and sitting in the middle of it, I waited till I tired her out and compelled her to speak, and then she admitted that if I went to Benares she would no longer have any power over me. I told my husband. He was as pleased as I, and took me to Benares."

"Did you go anywhere on the road? Did you see Jagannatha?" asked the Padri. Parvatamma was looking outside at the lengthening shadows, and was evidently meditating a return home.

"As if I would have come back without seeing him! Why, I have even now a little *prasada* left, a little of the food that he consecrated. They gave it me at his temple. They were of the barber caste who gave it me. That was curious, wasn't it? They told me to press it to my eye before I tasted it. If any one forgets to do that or says he doesn't want it"—Parvatamma's voice here sank to a

whisper—" away go his eyes, he is struck blind. I will show you the *prasada* to-morrow, if you like, when I change my clothes."

" They say the god has neither arms nor feet. Is that true ? " asked the Padri.

" Yes, it is, and I can tell you the reason. There was once a certain king, I forget his name, but it doesn't matter. He built a huge temple at immense expense, and then invited famous sculptors to make him a god worthy to be placed in so wonderful a place. For a long time no one seemed willing to come forward. You see there was a penalty attached. If the image of the god did not please the King, the sculptor was to lose his head. Naturally, therefore, although the reward of success was great, even the most skilful artists hesitated and there was considerable delay. At length an old man presented himself and offered to do what the King required if he would agree to abide by a certain condition himself. And that condition was that no one, not even the King himself, was to enter the temple until the work was finished. The King gave his word, and the work began with every door closed. For about three months nothing more was seen of the

POUNDING GRAIN.

old man. Nothing, indeed, was heard of him but the noise he made at his work, and that noise couldn't have been greater if a score of men instead of one had been hammering inside. At last the King grew impatient, and pretending that he was afraid some injury was being done to his walls, he went to the door and called to the old man. He called again and again, but the only answer he received was an increase in the din within. The King then lost his temper, and, calling for levers and workmen, the door was lifted off its hinges and a god was disclosed complete in every way save that it had neither arms nor feet. Too disappointed for reflection, the King turned upon the old man, and furiously demanded the reason for making him a god in that mutilated condition. The old man replied that it was due to the King's impatience. If he hadn't broken his word and forced his way in the god could have been completed. Limbs rivalling the rest of the body in grace and beauty would have been added. 'You yourself are responsible for the deformity; I am guiltless.' Choking with rage, the King summoned his guards and ordered them to behead the old man, but before they could seize him he cried out, 'Be not angry, O King! this is the image of Jagannatha. The whole world shall flock here to worship him,' and leaping into the air, he crept through a chink in the wall and vanished into thin air."

"But," asked the Padri, suprised at so dramatic and unexpected a conclusion, "how could a mere man crawl through a tiny hole like that?"

"Don't you see?" replied Parvatamma, "he was not an ordinary man. He was the Most High who, in the form of a man, had been doing the work. Hence the glory of Jagannatha and the blessedness of those who throw themselves down in the way of his car and die

crushed under its heavy wheels—but this miserable Government won't let us even die as we wish," and the old woman rose and departed, mourning the days long since gone by when religious men and women could stain the patient earth with their life-blood or mount up to heaven in flames of fire.

"What are we to say to such people?" said the Padri, turning to Shantappa.

"Nothing that I can recommend," he replied. "I have failed too often myself, but we might save some of the next generation from such ideas if only you would open a school and lay hold of the children while they are still impressionable. The townspeople have often asked you to do so."

The Padri shook his head. It was useless trying to explain. To Shantappa England was the treasury of the world as well as the home of Christianity.

CHAPTER XIX

HALTING BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS

WHEN the Padri left Shantappa and continued his journey his next halting-place was a village half-surrounded by gardens of cocoanut and plantain trees, where a friend of his, a small farmer named Siddappa, lived. He was not a professed Christian by any means, but he was a type of a great many interesting people in India, and his friendship was a fact very much valued by the Padri. One day the two got talking together about each other's religious beliefs. Siddappa gave this account of himself—

"Well, I am, I suppose, a Lingait still. Anyhow, I have still the symbol of the god in my possession, and I can show it to you if you wish. It is fastened round my neck here; but, upon my word, I don't see much use in it. I might just as well throw it away. But I've worn it so long that I can't bring myself to part with it. I was born a Lingait, and I suppose a Lingait I shall die. I am not made of the stuff that martyrs are made of. I am not equal to the task of discarding one religion and setting up another. And yet I am not so bound up with my caste that I couldn't sever myself from it if I saw fit, but the fact is, I am bewildered by the claims and appeals of the various religions and, uncertain as I am of myself, I don't feel inclined to quit my village, my house and my farm, only to repent of my haste afterwards. Surely I can worship the true God without

alienating my own people. Am I to cut myself adrift from them because, by the mysterious working of my destiny, I can see things to which they are blind? There are many customs among us not only senseless but bad. Well, I have renounced them, and when any of my people protest, I give them a piece of my mind on the subject. They don't like these new views of mine at all. They call me all sorts of names in consequence, but what does that matter? I am not afraid of them. They know that, and so they never go too far in their abuse of me. For the rest, God knows my heart and will protect me. Their threats and jeers don't trouble me."

A THRESHING FLOOR.

Siddappa belonged to the lower middle class of India, and this is the class whose friendship must be cultivated if one wants to understand India. Siddappa was not a fair specimen of this class left to itself, but whenever an intelligent and sympathetic missionary comes into constant contact with it, a great many Siddappas are evolved. Consequently it may not be out of place to piece his history together as on various occasions it was told by himself—

"Yes, I am fond of reading, but I am not a literary man. I don't suppose I could compose a verse of poetry, even to save my life. My father sent me to school, and there, at the cost of a good many

tears, I learned thousands of lines off by heart. I used to recite them, it is true, like a parrot. I didn't understand the meaning of half of them, but I lost no credit at school on that account. My schoolmaster himself was not much wiser. But now my scholarship has vanished along with my youth. Give me a simple little book to read which is written in the language of the people; ask me to write an ordinary business letter or add up a few figures, and I don't suppose I should disgrace myself, but anything beyond that would beat me. I once started to read our Basava Purana, but, not knowing enough of the ancient dialect to appreciate it, I had to give it up. It is about as easy for men like me to find pearls in that hill yonder as anything worth remembering in some of these books of ours. The fact is I am a farmer, just a farmer, and nothing more. My people have lived here for about a hundred and fifty years, and, although I say it who shouldn't, we bear an honourable name, known to every one for miles round. If I attempted to write a history of my ancestors, I think I, even I, could make a fairly creditable book.

"Yes, I am married, of course. I have five children, three boys and two girls. Every one regards me as a fairly prosperous man, and so I suppose I am. In these times, what with famine and plague and other troubles, if a man can feed and clothe himself and his family without running into debt, he may seriously congratulate himself. My wants are not many. I am easily satisfied, and, honestly, I don't think I covet the possessions of anybody, his house, land, cattle or anything.

"If only people would carry their own burdens and not impose them upon others; if only they would attend to their own business

and not meddle with the affairs of others, the world would be much happier. But what you said last night is very true. He is a great man who stretches out a helping hand occasionally to assist those who are struggling with adversity. He must not look for any gratitude, though. Some of the people whom I have helped have not hesitated to do me a bad turn afterwards. Still, what you say is quite right. It is a fine thing to think of others as well as yourself.

"We farmers have a good deal that is trying to put up with. We live from hand to mouth, as a rule. But our lot would not be such a hard one if we were a little more provident. Most of us spend what we get in a good season, only to go hungry in a bad. The ants have more common sense than some of us. The farmers in this neighbourhood not in debt could be seated in a cart, and then all the space would not be occupied. You know my neighbour Virappana? He ought to have been a wealthy man by this time, but he is up to his ears in debt. I don't suppose his drinking vessel even is his own, and his story is the story of thousands. He had three daughters. When they were married, what must the senseless one do but borrow a lot of money just to make a sensation in the village and get himself talked about. It was all spent in festivities in about a week, and now not one of the girls or their husbands is one rupee the better for it, and Virappana is practically a serf in the employment of the money-lender, on the very land he used to call his own! Debt! It doesn't bear discussing. To borrow money for anything you want is like mixing poison with the nectar of the gods before you drink it. I know what I am talking about. I have not always been as wise as I am now.

"Then just think of the farmers who have been ruined in the

law courts. To go to law, with bribery and perjury to be contended with, is pure gambling. Everybody admits it, and yet, on the very slightest provocation, men rush off to engage a lawyer, as moths fly towards a candle. My uncle, for instance. He quarrelled with my father-in-law about some petty thing which a *panchayat*, a few neighbours as arbitrators, could have settled for him in five minutes. I did my best to pacify them both, but they would not listen to reason.

TRAVELLING BEARS.

They must needs take the case into court, and, before they had finished, they had sold every rood of land they possessed, and their case was as far from settlement as ever.

"But though we farmers are often responsible for most of our misfortunes we don't always deserve them. We may toil till every muscle aches, and we can't eat our evening meal for fatigue, and in the end, find that we might just as well have spent the time in bed. Who can contend with the sun and the rain when they are

not disposed to be favourable? We are absolutely dependent upon the weather.

"And then the officials! Most of them seem to regard us as their prey. How many have you known having any sympathy with or compassion for the people they are supposed to protect. There may be some. If so, all I can say is they have not come my way. Your people do their best to superintend and keep them in order, I don't doubt, but they have only two eyes each, and if they had a thousand it would not be enough. If a man doesn't yield to extortion, sooner or later he gets into trouble. It is not only the police constable or the Reddi or the Kurnum. They are bad enough, but we know how to deal with such minor officials. A few rupees at the right time generally satisfies them. But now and again a Tahsildar is appointed who turns out to be no better than a fierce man-eating tiger among us. He seems to think he has been appointed solely for his own benefit, and, night and day, he will be squeezing the people for money to marry his daughters, educate his sons, and provide for his old age when he retires. No, I am not exaggerating. I admit things are not so bad as they used to be. I met our present Tahsildar, for instance, riding across a field the other day. He was going somewhere, they told me, to inquire personally into the facts concerning a case in which he had to give a decision. That was a thing no Englishman could do even if he would. He hasn't the requisite knowledge of the people, and never will have. They also tell me that the Tahsildar is as much above taking a bribe as the English Commissioners and Judges are. If that is true I hope he will grow old in this neighbourhood. We need men like him badly.

"Why don't we make a complaint? We ought to do so, but we can't

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"Why don't we make a complaint? We ought to do so, but we can't

trust each other. We are split up into so many different castes and families and tribes that we can't even unite against a common foe. You know a village called Devasamudra? Well, the Reddi there is a terror. He makes his people plough his lands, sow his fields, and harvest them for him. They can get nothing done for themselves unless they bribe him. When his daughter was married, every one in the village had to subscribe towards her expenses, and I don't suppose he paid a rupee out of his own pocket. Once, however, they did turn against him. I forget what it was, but he made some extortionate demand to which even his docile villagers refused to accede. It became war to the knife then, and the people knew it, so they determined to ruin him, and reduce him to harmlessness. They set to work to bring a case against him. It had to be one that could be depended upon. They dared not risk failure. So for weeks together they cudgelled their brains for a charge which could be sustained under the strictest investigation. But, if you will believe me, though the man was notorious for iniquity, and everybody in the village at some time or another must have suffered on his account, either in his person or his pocket, at the end they found themselves helpless. Bribery? Letting out waste Government land and himself pocketing the rents? He had revelled in both and had made a small fortune, but there wasn't a soul in the village but some time or other had himself connived at it, either by being the one who had given the bribe or the one who had cultivated the land for its smaller rent. Who could give evidence, therefore? Whatever he had done that was criminal, some one else was involved whose safety the village was obliged to consider. At last feeling ran so high that the spirit of faction was aroused, and, as you know, there is hardly a village

without its faction and its undying feud. The Reddi discerned his opportunity, and placating the strongest faction, rallied them around him, and there he is to-day more powerful than ever.

"Then they say that we farmers are lazy. Don't you believe it. Laziness is not a fault you can charge us with as a class. It is the spirit of enterprise that we lack. Do you know Somanna? Well, he is a specimen of what I mean. He had a garden of betel leaf. He worked hard enough to satisfy any one. But when prices fell and trade grew dull he just gave up in despair and lay under a tree all day. It never occurred to him to strike out in some different line. No, he was a gardener, and lived by betel. He knew nothing about anything else, he said, and hadn't the courage to learn.

ONE OF THE CHIEF GURUS OF THE LINGAITS, MYSORE STATE.

"Once a merchant imported some foreign ploughs for sale. I bought one or two, and with the same number of oxen did twice as much work. The very soil cried out with delight under their sharp

shares. But do you think any one else would take any? No, it was something new, and was to be shunned, and, besides, if the plough broke, who was to repair it? But I needn't tell you all the objections they made. You can guess them.

"How did I hear about your teaching? It was like this. You remember your Satyappa—Christian Satyappa he was called. He was bred and born in these parts. I knew him when he was a boy, and I remember that even then he was different somehow from other boys, more thoughtful, always discussing religion. It never occurred to him to take things for granted, like his elders, and leave them alone. He was always questioning this and arguing that. It did not surprise me, as it surprised others, when he joined your people, but I stopped him one day in the street and asked him the reason. I shall never forget what he told me. It made an impression on my mind which I have never lost. He said that about two years before, he had been visiting a village over yonder called Devapuram, and came across a crowd listening to a man speaking about the worship of God. He asked a man standing by who the speaker was. 'I don't know,' he replied. 'He comes here mostly every market day, and speaks in this fashion whenever he can get a crowd to listen to him.'

"Satyappa said he couldn't make out what he was driving at for some time, until he used an illustration which went home to Satyappa's heart like a bullet. It was nothing that I could see anything remarkable in. I forget what it was now, but Satyappa said he felt as though the speaker had known him all his life. He put into words a thought that all along Satyappa himself had been thinking and only needed language to express for himself. The end of it was that Satyappa

ARRIVAL OF A GURU.

lost all interest in anything else but the new teaching, and used to follow the speaker about like a dog. He couldn't hear enough or read enough, and, finally, he scandalized us all one day by throwing in his lot with your people.

"That was before you came to this country. There was another Padri then, and he used to come and see Satyappa once or twice a year. I remember his tent, pitched in the very place where yours is. At first, like every one else, I kept aloof from Satyappa and his Padri. I was too much afraid of being bewitched myself to go near

them, but one day I came upon them both as they were preaching in the gateway of the village. Curiosity overcame my misgivings, and I stopped and joined the crowd. The Padri happened to be speaking as I drew near, and I was never so agreeably surprised in all my life. I had expected to hear a tirade against everything I had held dear all my life, but instead, I heard him talk about lost sheep and a faithful shepherd, about sowing seed—some to die, some to live, about a god who was God and Guru in one, and so on. He certainly made fun about some things, and set the crowd laughing at times at themselves, but he offended none except those who would have been angry with Basava himself if he had come again with any new teaching. He was so polite and agreeable and was so familiar with our village habits and customs that I took to him at once, and one day when he visited the village, I accompanied our schoolmaster, who wanted to pose him with some of his tricky questions, and had made an appointment to see him, along with some of his selected friends. I remember one of the questions: Did the Padri really think it could be right for us to forsake the god of our fathers and worship his? I remember the question so well because in answering it the Padri quoted Sarvagnya, that verse beginning 'How many gods do you think there are, that you mention this one and that? It was the first time I had ever heard our Shastras quoted by a foreigner. It sounded so queer. He didn't chant the verse as we do; he repeated it as though it had been a proverb.

"What did the schoolmaster say next? Something to the effect that since there was only one God we were all worshipping one and the same. The only difference between us consisted in the name. That was a small matter, and there was no need for a missionary to

interfere with our methods. But the discussion was not fruitful. The schoolmaster wanted to argue that black was white, and the Padri wearied of it and changed the conversation.

"That was the beginning of my intimacy with your predecessor. A few days later I happened to meet him in the road. He recognized me and spoke to me, and eventually I got into the habit of visiting him whenever he came to our village, and, little by little, he acquainted me with bits of the story of your Jesus and gave me some books which told me more. I don't know how many years ago that was, but I have never lost the conviction that then dawned upon me—that your Guru, Jesus, is incomparable. There is no one like Him.

"Finally my conviction was clinched by a visit we had about that time from our own Lingait Guru. He came attended by about a

GROUP OF LONG-HAIRED FODAS (ABORIGINES) OF S. INDIA.

dozen disciples. He entered the gate in state, seated upon an elephant and was entertained all the time he was with us in one of the temples decorated in his honour. He stayed about four days, and then, having collected tribute from us all, went away in the same ostentatious fashion that he came. Never a word did he utter designed to do any of us good. He left neither instruction nor comfort behind him. All his talk was about his dues, and those he mercilessly extracted from us all. Some of us were driven to the house of the money-lender for the money we had to pay him, and a few of us have never shaken ourselves free from the money-lender's clutches then fastened upon us. One poor fellow was excommunicated because of his inability to raise the tribute demanded from him. He couldn't light a fire or draw water even. We were forbidden all intercourse with him, and he was practically driven out of the village. Where he is now no one knows.

"I was not the only one among us who contrasted this Guru with the Padri. The visit of the one devastated the country like a plague of locusts. The visit of the other refreshed us like the monsoon, the rains that terminate the awful drought of the long summer."

Such was Siddappa's story. Such is the stage of opinion and conduct which so many of his class have reached, where so many are content to remain.

The Padri spent as many days as he could in the village. It is easy to outstay one's welcome in India. People there object to the least appearance of hustling, but so long as he stayed he was engaged night and day in the attempt to raise the temperature of Siddappa's enthusiasm a little, and to fan the flame that had been lit in other minds as well by that predecessor to whom Siddappa had referred. Then he left for a place called Lokikeri.

CHAPTER XX

A DEPUTATION

AS the crow flies Lokikeri is not so very far away. It can be reached the third day after leaving Siddappa's village if one is not hindered on the road, but our Padri's journeys were always liable to interruptions.

It was the afternoon of the second day, and the Padri was contemplating the work that lay before him in the town close by where he was camped, when he saw a number of men approaching his tent. They were not exactly strangers to him, but there was only one man among them whose name he could remember, and he was a man whom he had extricated from some difficulty in days gone by. Directly the Padri saw and recognized his friend, his instinct warned him that he was to have another problem set him. The fact that he had helped Eranna once was just the reason why he should be asked to help him again. But it turned out that Eranna had only come to introduce the deputation. It was not about his own business that he had come this time. The deputation had engaged him to accompany them as their spokesman because his one transaction with the Padri on his own account had been so satisfactory that it seemed to prove that Eranna possessed the secret of managing him somehow.

They were very shy at first. Even Eranna found it difficult to open out the subject that had brought them there, but, little by

little, the Padri in his inimitable way elicited it from them, and discovered, to his astonishment, that he was required to arbitrate between a Lingait Guru and his disciples.

It appeared that one of the deputation, an elderly man named Basappa, wearing a turban so big that it seemed like a gratuitous insult to place it above a little wizened face like his, had bought a house from a fellow-townsman named Virappa. They both went to the taluq town to complete the legal formalities by registering the purchase in the Government records, and while they were absent, Virappa's nephews, who objected to the sale of property which might one day become theirs by inheritance, broke the lock, and, entering the house, had placed their families in possession. When Basappa returned and learned what the nephews had done he naturally appealed to Virappa to use his authority and eject the families. Virappa, however, knowing his relatives better than Basappa, absolutely refused

NATIVES DRESSING COTTON IN THEIR OWN WAY.

to attempt anything of the sort. "It is your property now. Eject them yourself," he said, and disclaimed all responsibility.

Then Basappa took the law into his own hands, and with the assistance of a few friends turned out the trespassers. This resulted in a fray between the parties, in which blood was shed, and the magistrate was appealed to. The magistrate decided that both parties were to blame, and he bound them over to keep the peace in future and settle their quarrel in a more legitimate manner; but incidentally observing that Basappa was evidently the rightful owner of the house, Basappa went back in triumph.

For some days he lived in peace, and then the local priest moved in the matter. Here was an opportunity for him to make money. He descanted upon the scandal caused, not so much by the quarrel itself, as by the choice of weapons used in the fight, slippers being particularly offensive to caste feelings, and he fined them all round. The nephews were wise enough or docile enough to submit and pay, but Basappa refused. When he used a slipper he only followed an example which the nephews had first set, he said.

The local priest then had recourse to a higher authority in the caste, who demanded from Basappa fifty rupees, a greater fine still. Basappa could not altogether defy this sentence, but pleading that fifty rupees was more than he could raise, offered to pay five. Incensed at such contumacy, the great man refused to reduce the fine, and Basappa still holding out, excommunicated him from all caste fellowship and privileges.

The sentence ought to have been enforced by the whole village regarding him as an outcaste, as practically dead to the world, and declining all intercourse with him, in which case the punishment

WOOD CUTTING.

would soon have been found intolerable, and Basappa would have had to submit. But, for some reason, twenty families sympathized with him and espoused his cause, and Basappa, though in disgrace, was not at present suffering much inconvenience. His object in visiting the Padri was to induce him to do "something" for him. What that "something" was Basappa could not even suggest, but he felt sure that if the Padri cared to exert himself on his behalf, the end would be humiliation for his enemies and triumph for himself.

It was not the first time, nor perhaps the hundredth, that people in difficulties had come like this to the Padri for extrication. And it was not the first time, nor perhaps the hundredth, that the Padri, after listening to their story, had declined, as he did on this occasion, to interfere.

In the first place, being only a Padri he could do nothing more than give advice, and that, of course, the Lingait authorities would have laughed at. In the second place, it was borne in upon him as he listened that there was far more in the case than he was allowed to see. Most Indian quarrels have their roots and ramifications so far under the surface that only very rarely can justice ever be vindicated. If the deputation had brought the nephews with them, or the local priest even, arbitration might have been possible and some settlement might have been effected. As it was, suspecting from long experience that as much had been concealed as revealed, the Padri could do no more than make one or two common-sense suggestions, and then send the deputation back to their village. He would have been very disappointed at his failure to settle their dispute were it not that he knew he had achieved something far more profitable. He had gained the friendship of every man present, and, henceforth, wherever he met them they would be glad to stop and talk to him. They would welcome him to their houses and introduce him to their friends, and by so much had he enlarged the sphere of his influence as a Christian Missionary. The evening had by no means been wasted.

CHAPTER XXI

SOME PERPLEXITIES

THE next day at dawn the Padri sent on his tent ahead of him, and taking a more circuitous route himself, he paid a visit to all the villages on his way.

Wherever he could collect an audience, no matter how small, he stayed to preach, but when he came in sight of Lokikeri, instead of making for his little white tent pitched under one or two cocoanut trees, he turned aside to a certain field, where he hoped to find one of his people named Mugappa. That was the only place, indeed, where there was any certainty of meeting Mugappa, for he was a very timid man, and might or might not be willing to risk observation by coming to the tent. Sure enough there Mugappa was, fighting a deadly weed which the farmers have literally to dig up by the roots. An affectionate greeting passed between them, and they adjourned to the shade of a tree to talk. Mugappa was a taciturn man as a rule, but if any man could make him talk it was the Padri. A few inquiries soon set him going. The season had been a disastrous one. Nothing had prospered; either the rain had failed altogether or had fallen at the wrong time. He himself had been very ill, and, since the Padri's last visit, one of his sons had died. The Reddi had plagued him, and, on the whole, he rather wished he was dead.

The Padri listened with all the sympathy the poor fellow deserved,

said a few things to comfort him, induced him to promise to come after dark to a service in the tent, and then for a space there was silence between them. The Padri had something to say which required to be said emphatically, and yet tenderly, and Mugappa, guessing what was coming, was not anxious to make any further remark to make the Padri's task any easier. At last the Padri began.

Did Mugappa honestly think he had deserved any happier lot? He was no longer young and inexperienced. He had read the Scriptures, and knew the truth that God never failed to honour those who honoured Him, and yet he acted as though his Christian creed were something to be ashamed of. "As often as not," continued the Padri, "when your pastor comes to visit you, so fearful are you lest the neighbours suspect you of any serious attachment to Christian worship, that you absent yourself from your house the whole day long. And when I come, and my visit costs me no little time and trouble, I have to seek you out in the fields. I have to peer among the trees for you. I have almost to crawl among the bushes as though I were engaged in some unlawful business and were afraid of being seen. Is this fair to me? Is such timidity fair to the Cause?"

"But what can I do?" asked Mugappa gloomily. "I am not a courageous man. I am what I am, as God made me. I am all alone here. You visit the village once or twice a year. The pastor lives in another village far away. I have to bear the brunt of persecution alone."

"That is not so, Mugappa," replied the Padri. "You are not alone. God has helped others—He can protect you. The fact is, you are now suffering the consequences of the initial mistake you made when you refused to confess your Christian belief in public.

You have all along been trying to face both ways at once, an impossible performance, and the attempt has involved you in fresh complications and deceit every day. You know too much ever to be happy now outside the Christian community, and yet you will not obey your conscience and bravely, openly, enter it. It is the boy on the bank who shivers, not he who has made the plunge. If you would only put God to the test, you would soon find what wonderful things He can do for His people. You could not be more miserable than you are now, whatever happened."

Thus faithfully the Padri did his duty by Mugappa, but nothing more could he elicit from him in reply except variations of the usual lament and excuse, "I am what I am. God must give me courage."

As the days in Lokikeri went by and one problem followed another, it seemed to the Padri as though he had never before found the conditions of life in India so awkward to deal with. He was happy enough, for he knew that he was presiding over the inauguration of a Christian church, and the difficulty had never yet arisen in coping with which his cheerfulness had deserted him, but this time all the grace and wisdom he possessed were tested to straining point.

A group of people, all related to each other in different ways, so that they were practically one large family, had asked to be publicly received into fellowship with the Christian Church. That meant baptism—sprinkling their heads with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a ceremony which the Hindus resent as much as the Christians who have submitted to it prize. Curious to relate, these people had obtained what may be called their introduction to the Lord Jesus Christ from Mugappa—the very timid Mugappa, of all men.

A young man named Ramappa was practically the head of this family. He had one day asked Mugappa why it was that the Christian pastor was visiting his house so regularly. Ramappa was not one to make mischief, so Mugappa had confessed that it was to hold a service with his family that he came. This led to further inquiry and explanation, and later on to an interview with the pastor himself, who henceforth visited Ramappa's house as often as he did Mugappa's. Under the pastor's instruction Ramappa soon mastered the contents of one of the Gospels, and was so impressed that, marvellous to relate, he taught his mother and sisters and his wife to read also in order that they might sympathize with him and be prepared to follow him in the great step which he foresaw he would be compelled to take to satisfy his conscience and obtain peace of mind.

A HILL MUSICIAN PLAYING ON A SARANGI.

The Padri found them as frank as Mugappa was secretive, and was delighted with them. The contrast which their clean home presented to the other houses in the slum in which they lived was sufficient to assure him that their Christianity had already borne fruit in one direction, and as he sat talking with them one evening after

prayers, he discovered that it was equally fertile in other directions.

Perhaps what pleased him most was the ingenuous spirit of the old mother. Her hopes for the future, when all her family, publicly received into the fellowship of Christ's Church, would thereby be placed under His care that never was known to fail; when her grandchildren would be receiving a Christian education; when such as were sick with horrible diseases would be restored to health in the Mission hospital—her belief, in short, that that passage from Isaiah which Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth would be literally fulfilled in the experience of herself and her dear ones, was so pathetically child-like and undoubting that as he listened to the picture she drew of the happy future the Padri prayed as he never prayed before: "O Lord, in Thee have they trusted; let them never be confounded."

But in regard to this public ceremony that they asked for—what was his duty? Ramappa's living was obtained by playing certain musical instruments at the head of those processions in which the Hindu takes so much delight and pride. That living would fail him, of course, directly he was baptized. The people around were fond of him, but they could not employ a baptized Christian.

It is not always the neighbours who wish to punish the Christian convert. In the case of Ramappa it certainly was not. But behind Hindu society there lurks the sinister figure of the priest, and it is the fear of him that often sets in motion the forces of religious persecution. For if the people were to ignore a man's conversion and continued their intercourse with him as though nothing had happened, that would make them partners with him in his supposed guilt, would infect them with the same ceremonial uncleanness, and render them

liable first to a fine, and afterwards to that special form of punishment which we call excommunication.

Another consideration that could not be neglected was this. If he received this family into Christian fellowship by baptism, and spoiled its caste in the eyes of Hindu society, he made himself responsible for their future ; that is to say, he made himself responsible for their support as soon as their niche in Hindu society failed them, and they were thrown into the street. If he did not somehow provide for them, the criticism of the market-place would be that having compassed his own mysterious ends in spoiling their caste, he had flung them aside and deserted them. In this charge women would make themselves especially prominent. But if, recognizing his responsibility, he did attempt to provide for them in some way, the gravest misapprehension concerning his methods of work would arise in the country. His exertions on their behalf would look like bribing people to become Christians, and it would be more difficult than ever for him to depend upon the motives of poor people when they came asking to be received into the Christian Church.

Of course the Padri had warned Ramappa what the consequences would be if he and his renounced the worship of Hanuman so publicly, but the fact that he had warned would only be reckoned as a proof of his knowledge of the ways of the country. It would not absolve him from what every one would regard as his responsibility for a family of fellow-Christians out of work. Even if Hindu society abstained from criticism (and they would not abstain, they would revel in criticism) the Padri still would feel the responsibility. What was he to do ! He brooded over the problem day and night. Past experience told him that if he disowned responsibility for the social

consequences of baptism, Christ's name suffered, and past experience assured him also that if he should acknowledge any responsibility an awkward precedent would be formed equally injurious to Christ's cause. When he passed from Ramappa's case and came to inquire into the circumstances of other members of the family the Padri's perplexities increased.

One young man, for example, had been decoyed away from his home at the age of fourteen by a woman who wished to get her daughter married to some one. As soon as he became the girl's husband, directly after the ceremony, he had been summarily dismissed to his home, and he had never been allowed to see the face of his bride again. He had not the smallest desire to see it, but here was a complication, intelligible only to those who have become acquainted with the civilization of the East, which obviously made baptism for the present inadvisable. It is impossible to explain, but whoever baptized that young man must first help him to get a divorce.

Then the case of another member of the family, this time a daughter, turned out to be no easier to deal with. Some time after the family had come under the influence of Mugappa and his pastor, this girl had acquired the practice of praying to the Christian's God. But at this time no one seriously thought of renouncing Hinduism. Then her marriage took place, and she went off to her husband's village, where this practice was soon discovered. She was beaten, of course, and that failing to put a stop to the habit, it was demanded that, dressed in a few leaves only, she should stand before the village god in his temple by way of atonement for her desecration of a Hindu home. Objecting to such treatment, she had run away from her husband, back to her mother's house, and now was not only seeking admission

into a Christian Church but the protection of the Padri as well. Whoever baptized that girl ought to be quite certain he knew what he was doing.

And these were not the only members of the family whose position required thinking about. Two others, at least, were earning their living in ways of which the Church could not possibly approve.

VILLAGE MUSICIANS.

So that by the time the Padri had finished his investigations, he was about as puzzled to know what to do as he had ever been in his life. He remembered one or two instances (only one or two, it is true, but they were enough), where men and women just as sincere as these people under discussion now had induced him to baptize them, and then afterwards when troubles gathered thickly around them, unable

to endure them or to understand why he could not do more for them than he did, had denounced him in public as the author of their misfortunes and had repudiated any connexion thenceforth with him or his Church.

Well, the Padri eventually called a meeting, where, after earnest prayer for God's guidance and control, the desire of the Lokikeri people for public recognition as followers of Christ was discussed in all its bearings, and then the Padri gave his decision.

It was evident, he said, that they regarded the rite of baptism as a ceremony binding the missionary as well as themselves to certain obligations. They had to learn that baptism was not necessarily a guarantee that the Padri would be able to protect his people when their world excommunicated them. He would do his best to help them, of course, but sometimes there was nothing he could do. Baptism was an avowal on the convert's part that he believed in Christ and would accept any lot God might permit. "When I am quite sure," continued the Padri, "that you agree with me, then I will return with joy to baptize you and help you thus to publish abroad your faith and love. But if that is your object why wait for any action of mine? The day will come when the village Guru will call on you for your tribute. Ought you to give it? You will be required to make some salutation in honour of Hanuman the god. Can you now obey? It may happen that if you have been living the loving gentle life of Christ the people will forgive you if you refuse. On the other hand the probability is they will, willingly or unwillingly, excommunicate you.

"Anyhow, let your baptism follow and not precede the 'great confession.' In short, dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand *alone*."

Here, then, we take leave of the Padri. The people and situation at Lokikeri are so characteristic of the India where he worked that no more suitable incident could be found with which to close this little book. But, some one says, everything is left so very indefinite, so incomplete. What became of the Rajah? Did he get his loan? Did he introduce Narayanamurti's scheme? The answer to the two latter questions is in the affirmative. Yes, he did, but since the Padri had played his little part and had nothing more to do with the matter, any interest left becomes purely political and outside the scope of this book.

Then what about Satyawati? Did she never learn that the light that was in her was Christ? She may have, but she made no sign. Well then, Siddappa? Did he never make up his mind, never make the great decision? That is for the Heavenly Father to say. On his very death-bed the Padri could get no more out of him.

The fact is, in dealing with the caste people of India, we must have infinite patience. For the present, it ought to be stimulus enough for us all that our Christian Literature Societies provide books which can comfort and sustain the Satyawatis of India, that the missionary Societies through their missionaries are able to provide the Siddappas of India with Christian friends. Impatience is natural, but it indicates ignorance of the problem which India sets us and want of sympathy with her people.

The missionary on the spot is impatient enough. The long years have endeared the villagers to him so much that he resents the unnecessary horrors which they suffer daily. He knows so well that India's only hope is Christ. But he is impatient, not so much with her delay in accepting Him, as with the little that he

can do to induce her to accept Him. Given more schools, more hospitals and more workers, he says, and how the progress of the Kingdom could be accelerated!

But the missionary has consolation which the world knows nothing about. He has fellowship and intercourse with a number of Indian Christians to whom the Lord Jesus is so palpably dear that, whenever he likes, he may avert his gaze from the work that yet remains to be done and rejoice his eyes with that which has been done already. The faithful heroic few upon whom the burden of subscribing to the Societies seems almost exclusively to rest are without that encouragement; and so few of us, alas! have the power to help them. The deepest, richest Christian life in India is something requiring genius for its portrayal. All that most men can say (and surely the testimony is not altogether inadequate) is that there are men and women in the Indian Church so essentially and intelligently Christian that the missionary feels his intimacy with them to be not only an honour and a blessing to himself but a more than adequate reward for all the money that has been contributed to the cause of Missions for so many years with so much self-denial.

CROSSING A RIVER ON A RAFT.

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